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THE
ETHICAL PHILOSOPHY
OF
SAMUEL CLARKE.

INAUGURAL DISSERTATION

PRESENTED TO THE

UNIVERSITY OF LEIPZIG

FOR THE

DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

JAMES EDWARD LE ROSSIGNOL.

LEIPZIG,
PRINTED BY G. KREYSING.

1892.



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PREFACE.

In the following essay I have endeavoured to give an account of an ethical theory once held in high esteem, but now chiefly valuable as representing an interesting period of English Ethics. To say that Clarke has been in general misunderstood by writers on ethical subjects, would be to assert too much; but it is not too much to say that a complete account of his ethical system is not to be found in any History of Ethics; nor do I know that a monogram on the subject has yet appeared.

Clarke's ethical theory is most completely stated in his second Boyle Lecture, the "Discourse concerning the unchangeable obligations of natural religion"; but his theory of knowledge, of human liberty, and, in part, his doctrine of motives, are more carefully treated in several of his minor works, and these are very seldom read, even by students of philosophy. The two "Boyle Lectures" I have used in the sixth 8vo. edition of 1724; the "Letter to Dodwell", in the fifth 8vo. edition of 1718; and the correspondence between Leibniz and Clarke, in the first 8vo. edition of 1717. Appended to these volumes are to be found the minor writings mentioned in Ch. II Sect. I.

The principle works I have consulted, especially with reference to the first two chapters and the last, have been:—Ueberweg-Heinze's "Gesch. d. Philos."; Jodl's "Gesch. d. Ethik";

Zimmermann's "Clarke's Leben und Lehre" ("Denkschrift d. Kaiserl. Akad. d. Wissenschaften", phil.-hist. Cl. 19. Band S. 249—336); Leslie Stephen's "English Thought in the 18th Cent."; Sidgwick's "Outlines of the History of Ethics", and "Methods of Ethics"; Martineau's "Types of Ethical Theory", Vol. II; and "Encycl. Britt.", Art. "Clarke", by Prof. Flint.

J. E. LeRossignol.

Leipzig, Jan. 13th 1892.

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CHAPTER I.

A SKETCH OF ENGLISH ETHICAL THOUGHT FROM BACON TO CLARKE.

1. *Bacon* (1561—1626).¹⁾

Ethics, according to Bacon, is the Science of the Good and of the means whereby it is attained. His purpose, he declares, is not, like Aristotle and other ancient writers, merely to “describe the nature of the good, but rather to show how men may be induced to strive after it and obtain it”. Hence his two-fold division of “moral knowledge”, into “the Exemplar or Platform of Good, and the Regiment or Culture of the Mind”, “the one describing the nature of the Good, the other prescribing rules how to subdue, apply and accommodate the will of man thereunto”.²⁾ The Good, with Bacon, is equivalent to Happiness. It may be considered as *simple* or *compared*.³⁾ The former refers to the *kinds* of good, the

¹⁾ Our references are made to the ordinary two-volume edition of Bacon's works. Lond., 1838. His moral philosophy is contained in Bk. II. of the “Advancement of Learning”, which corresponds to Lib. VII of the “De Augmentis Scientiarum”. The results and conclusions of both are practically the same.

²⁾ Adv. of learn. Bk. II. p. 57.

³⁾ The following is Bacon's division of Ethics:

<i>Ethics</i>	{	The Exemplar of Good.	{ Simple. Compared.	{ Individual or Self-good.	{ Active. Passive.	{ Conservative. Perfective.			
							{ Good of Communion.	{ Duties of man in common. Respective duties.	
									{ The doctrine of men's natures and dispositions. The inquiry into the affections. The doctrine of remedies.

latter to *degrees* of good. The latter Bacon does not discuss at all, but leaves to the "infinite disputations" of the schools. *Simple good* is of two kinds,—"*Individual or Self-good*", and "*Good of Communion*". In Aristotelian language he asserts the latter is "the greater and worthier, because it tendeth to the conservation of a more general form".¹⁾ He gives no other reason why the good of all should be preferred to the individual good, nor does he attempt to show, as did Cumberland later, that both are necessarily identical. The "*Light of Nature*" he also mentions as indicating the performance of certain duties, but this seems a foreign and undigested element in Bacon's Ethics.²⁾ The "*good of communion*" does not mean the good of all mankind, but the sphere of obligation is confined within the limits of the state.

This principle of the good of all is of the greatest value to philosophy and ethics. It shows that the active life is to be preferred to the contemplative; that happiness consists in virtue; that individual pleasure is not the highest good; and it supplies the highest possible end of life. By thus supplying an end of life it at the same time provides a standard of moral action, for in order to decide whether a man be virtuous or not it is necessary to know what *ends* he has set before himself, and how faithfully he conforms his life and action in accordance therewith.³⁾ Virtue is the regulating and conforming of life and action with reference to the highest end of life. With respect to the "*good of communion*", there are two classes of duties,—*duties of man in common*, and *respective duties*. The former are the duties of men as members

¹⁾ According to Bacon, the fundamental problem of Philosophy is the discovery of *forms*. He seems to have borrowed this idea partly from the Atomists, and partly from Aristotle, though he largely developed it himself. It is difficult to obtain an exact idea of what he meant by the word *form*. Sometimes it is declared to be the thing itself, or its essence; sometimes the necessary condition or cause of individual existence, the *sine qua non* of all physical qualities. See Encycl. Britt. Art. "Bacon".

²⁾ De Aug. lib. IX. Also Jodl, Gesch. d. Ethik, Vol. I. p. 95.

³⁾ Adv. of learn. Bk. II. p. 64.

of the state; the latter are the duties arising from the various minor relations of men to one another, as in family, profession, employment. The *end* of duties in common is the good of the nation; the *ends* to be attained by respective duties, are the good of the family, the profession or the individual, as the case may be, but the lower ends are to be subordinated to the chief end.

After indicating the various divisions and kinds of good, Bacon then treats of the *cultivation of the mind*, as the necessary condition for attaining the end desired. This he divides into three parts,—the “doctrine of men’s natures and dispositions”; the “inquiry into the affections”; and the “doctrine of remedies”. The discussion of the two first classes is an attempt at a psychological basis of practical Ethics. We must carefully observe and study human nature in general, and also the peculiarities of individual character and circumstances, if we would be successful in the education of men in virtue. But not only must the physician know the patient’s constitution; he must also know the disease, if he would administer proper remedies. The *affections* are the “infirmities of the mind”. “The mind in the nature thereof would be temperate and stayed, if the affections as winds, did not put it into tumult and perturbation”.¹⁾ The affections of pleasure and pain are the general affections; the affections of anger and tenderness, fear and hope, are examples of particular affections. In order to incite to right action, affection must be set against affection, that the stronger may overcome the weaker. Thus the state must use the affections of fear and hope “for the suppressing and bridling of the rest”. Fear of punishment overcomes the love of wrong-doing; hope of reward overbalances the desire for present gratification.²⁾

¹⁾ Adv. of learn. Bk. II. p. 63.

²⁾ We are here strikingly reminded of Descartes’ treatment of the passions, in his “*Traité des passions de l’âme*”; also of Spinoza’s proposition,—“A passion can only be restrained or removed by a passion opposite to and stronger than itself”. Sp. Eth. Bk. IV. prop. 7; Bk. III. prop. 43 &c.

The *doctrine of remedies*, based upon this knowledge of human nature, gives us rules for the education of the mind in virtue, and towards the highest good. Of these rules the chief is,—“the electing and propounding. unto a man’s self good and virtuous ends of his life, such as may be in a reasonable sort within his compass to attain”.¹⁾ The highest possible end is the good of all. Thus we have an ideal of life. Towards the realization of this ideal, no power is so efficacious as the Christian religion, because it implants in the soul “divine love or charity”, “which is excellently called the bond of perfection, because it comprehendeth and fasteneth all virtues together”.²⁾

Bacon was the first English philosopher to attempt a systematic theory of ethics. Still his ethics is only given in outline, and the outline was never filled, nor did any later writer develop the system as a whole.³⁾ Although we may notice apparent anticipations of later ethical thought, it was rather the spirit and method of Bacon that influenced English ethics, than any positive contribution to the science. What was new in his ethics was in great measure an attempt to apply the method of observation to the facts of human nature. Hobbes carried this method further in his endeavour to show the historical development of ethical ideas. Bacon’s theory of the “affections” we find further developed by Descartes and Spinoza, as also by writers of the school of Shaftesbury and Hume. His emphasizing of right education as essential to growth in virtue might be regarded as the forerunner of Locke’s “Thoughts concerning Education”, and other moralists, as Clarke, did not neglect the importance of right education, as the means whereby men are delivered from prejudice and moral blindness. Bacon’s principle of the “good of all” forms an

¹⁾ Adv. of learn. Bk. II. p. 65.

²⁾ Compare Spinoza on “Intellectual love”;—Eth. Bk. V. prop. 37 &c.

³⁾ See Fraser’s “Selections from Berkeley”, Intr. p. XIV.; Sidgwick “Hist. of Eth.”, p. 155. Also, Paulsen in Vierteljahrsschrift f. wissensch. Philos. I., S. 588.

important part of the ethics of Cumberland and Clarke, and especially of the Utilitarian school of Bentham and Mill.

It has been said that Bacon separated ethics from religion.¹⁾ This is partly true and partly false. He separated ethics from religion in so far as he did not make use of the expectation of future rewards and punishments as motives to right action. But he united religion and moral philosophy in that he made true religion the means whereby divine love or charity is implanted in the hearts of men, and made this love the inward power which leads and impels men to the practise of virtue.

In regard to this, we find after Bacon two principle lines of thought in England. The one sought to separate Ethics entirely from religion, and was even hostile to it; the other endeavoured to create a system of ethics which should be in accordance with both Reason and Revelation. The former trend is represented by Hobbes, and to a less extent by the English Deists; as defenders of the latter position we may mention Locke, Clarke, and the apologians Butler and Paley. The controversy thus occasioned raged throughout the latter part of the 17th and the former half of the 18th century, and every ethical writer was more or less influenced by it.

II. *Hobbes* (1588—1679).

Although a friend and whilom secretary of Bacon, Hobbes cannot be considered his disciple either in natural or moral philosophy. The problem of the origin of obligation he much more clearly comprehended than did Bacon; its solution is entirely different; and on the whole, the system of Hobbes shows but few resemblances to that of his great predecessor.²⁾ Hobbes begins his ethical system³⁾ with an investigation of

¹⁾ Jodl, *Gesch. d. Eth.* Vol. I. p. 96.

²⁾ Compare Robertson's "Hobbes" in Prof. Knight's "Philosophical Classics for English readers"; p. 20 and foll.

³⁾ Hobbes' ethico-political system is most amply set forth in his chief work,—"*Leviathan*", Lond. 1651; in which are incorporated the chief ideas expressed in his former works, "*De Homine*", and "*De Cive*".

human nature as it was, or may be supposed to have been, in man's original or natural state. In this state man was but little superior to the beasts in material conditions, although richer in the possession of reason. All men are by nature equal. They are not free beings, but impelled in all their actions by supreme selfishness. This selfishness manifests itself in the three ruling passions,—desire of safety, desire of gain, and desire of glory. In this original state of equality, all men have a right to everything, and men may injure and even kill one another without having committed any wrong, for where there is no law there can be no moral distinctions. The passions of men inevitably lead them to strife and war. The desire for gain leads men to take the possessions of others; the desire for glory causes them to endeavour to kill and enslave their fellow-men, and just precaution arising from the desire of safety leads men to resist the encroachments of others. Thus arises from the very first a state of war of all against all.¹⁾ The result is a condition of extreme misery.

But from this miserable state of nature there is a way of escape. Men have still other passions which act in a contrary direction to those already mentioned. These are,—the fear of death, the desire of things necessary to commodious living, and the hope by industry to obtain them. These all induce men to seek deliverance from the state of war, and thereupon Reason directs them to seek after peace, and suggests the means whereby this may be attained. Since the reasoning faculty is natural to man this Law of Reason may also be called the *Law of Nature*.²⁾ Among some twenty Laws of Nature, Reason commands primarily two things,—that peace

¹⁾ Lev. XIII. Also Robertson "Hobbes" p. 139 and foll.

²⁾ Although an opponent of Grotius, Hobbes would seem to have borrowed from him the ancient conception of the "Law of Nature", and to have introduced it into English philosophy, where it afterwards played so important a part. Grotius' chief work on the subject is his "De Jure Belli et Pacis", published in 1625, and is considered to have laid the foundations of modern International Law: See Ueberweg-Heinze, Geschichte d. Phil., Vol. III. p. 44.

is to be sought and that compacts are to be kept.¹⁾ Peace is the end and compact the means. Reason also reveals the particular nature of this compact. Each individual must surrender his right to everything, and these rights must be transferred to a central power. Thus arises the *Leviathan*, the absolute ruler of the state, the living embodiment of all power, the source of all law, justice, and right.²⁾ In the commands of Leviathan we have the utterance of the Law of Nature, and the standard of right and wrong. In his power to punish we have the sanction of morality. Obedience to the supreme power is the first duty of every man; even the dictates of conscience must be subordinated to the law of the state.³⁾ The church, also, must be under control of the state, and must aid in strengthening the law of the state and inducing obedience to its commands, by setting forth a prospect of future rewards and punishments.

Such was the system expounded in the “*Leviathan*” in the year 1651. Soon a storm of opposition arose on all sides. The political opinions of Hobbes pleased neither royalists nor parliamentarians; his religious ideas were condemned both by Protestants and Catholics; and moral philosophers of every kind combined to attack his theory of the source of obligation. The conflict lasted for nearly a century. Among his principal opponents may be mentioned,—Filmer, Bramhall, Cumberland, More, Cudworth, Locke, Clarke, Shafteshury, Butler. His assertion of the materiality of the soul and the consequent denial of the freedom of the will, his founding of obligation in power, the arbitrariness of the sanctions of morality, and the narrow egoism of the whole system, not to speak of the note of antagonism to church and clergy, seemed to many to threaten the destruction of all morality and religion.

1) De Cive Cap. II. § 2. “Prima et fundamentalis lex naturae est, quaerendam esse pacem, ubi haberi potest”. De Cive Cap. III. § 1. “Legum naturalium, derivitarum est pactis standum esse, sive fidem observandum esse”.

2) Leviath. Cap. XVII. “Atque haec est generatio magni illius Leviathan, vel ut dignius loquor, mortalis Dei; cui pacem et protectionum sub Deo immortalis debemus omnem”.

3) Lev. XXIX.

Cudworth's "Intellectual System" is largely a refutation of Hobbes, and Clarke's two chief works were written expressly as an answer to "Hobbes, Spinoza, and their followers". With regard to the source of obligation Clarke's whole theory is intended as a refutation of Hobbes, but he also subjects him to special criticism on several points.¹⁾ He endeavours to show Hobbes' inconsistency in maintaining there is no natural difference between right and wrong, at the same time that he asserts men *ought* to agree to establish peace and compacts. If the Law of Nature says it is right to seek peace, it certainly at the same time declares it wrong for one man to kill another, but Hobbes says in the state of Nature men have a right to kill one another if they see fit. According to Clarke, the Law of Nature not only declares it right that men should keep peace and compacts, but also gives directions with regard to all duties, as well before as after compact. Clarke also declares Hobbes wrong in making *power* the foundation of God's right over men, and of the right of the Leviathan over his subjects.²⁾ Power cannot be the foundation or source of right, but moral distinctions are founded in the "nature of things" antecedent to all considerations of power or weakness in the moral agent. Here it is evident Clarke's conception of *right* is different from that of Hobbes. According to Clarke, that is *right* which is in agreement with the nature and fitness of things; with Hobbes *right* is often equivalent to *power*, for that is right which is sanctioned by the command and power of Leviathan or God. Similarly, when Clarke declares Hobbes' "State of Nature" to be "not in any sense a state of nature",³⁾ by the expression "State of Nature", Clarke understands the ideal state which he supposes to have been the original state of man in the "Garden of Eden"; while Hobbes only means the actual savage state of mankind before

¹⁾ "Natural Religion", pp. 76—90.

²⁾ Lev. XXXI. "Regni divini naturalis jus derivatur ab eo, quod divinae potentiae resistere impossibile est".

³⁾ Nat. Rel. p. 85.

the institution of government. Thus the opponents of Hobbes partly attacked real weaknesses in his system, and partly misunderstood his fundamental conceptions.

III. *The Cambridge Platonists.*

As Hobbes and his friend Gassendi represent the revival of Epicurean philosophy in the 17th century, so the Cambridge Platonists represent a renewed interest in the philosophy of Plato seen through a Neo-Platonic medium. Here we find again the ancient opposition between the materialistic and idealistic trends of thought. Starting from a conception of the universe as the product and creation of an eternal mind, Cudworth, More, and their followers concerned themselves chiefly with three problems in ethics,—to preserve the union of ethics with religion; to maintain an intellectual principle in ethics; and to prove the permanence of moral distinctions.

In the year 1644, but two years after the appearance of Hobbes' "*De Cive*", we find Cudworth (1617—1688) at the University of Cambridge defending the thesis,—"*Dantur boni et mali rationes aeternae et indispensabiles*". This was through his life the centre of his ethical philosophy, and the key-note of opposition to Hobbes during the remainder of the century, and the chief problem Clarke set himself to prove in his second Boyle lecture of 1705. Cudworth's "*Intellectual System*",¹⁾ published in 1678, contains but few remarks on ethics, yet the same ideas are there expressed as were more elaborately set forth in his posthumous "*Treatise concerning eternal and immutable morality*", first published in 1731. Speaking of eternal truths, he says,—"*Neither are there such eternal truths as these only in mathematics, and concerning quantity, but also in ethics concerning morality*".²⁾ Thus he states the analogy between mathematical and moral truth, so much insisted on

¹⁾ "The true intellectual system of the universe, the first part; wherein all the reason and philosophy of atheism is confuted, and its impossibility demonstrated". By R. Cudworth, D. D. Lond. 1678.

²⁾ *Intel. Syst.* p. 734.

by More and Clarke. These eternal moral truths have their source in the divine mind, in the nature of God, but not in the will of God. "God's will is ruled by his justice, and not his justice ruled by his will, and therefore God himself cannot command what is in its own nature unjust".¹⁾ The individual mind, being derived from the "eternal unmade mind",²⁾ inherits these eternal moral truths, is conscious of them, and realizes their obligation. All men in all ages thus possess the same ideas of moral truth and obligation. This is the doctrine of "innate ideas", attacked by Locke, and it is of interest to notice that Clarke, although following along lines laid down by Cudworth, admits the force of Locke's arguments and rejects innate ideas.³⁾ This internal perception of moral truth, which Cudworth also calls *Conscience*, teaches men that the good of the whole is to be preferred to "selfish good and private utility",⁴⁾ in case of any clashing of interests.

Having thus explained how men come to the knowledge of duty, Cudworth does not seem to think it necessary to show how this theoretical knowledge is applied to practical life, and says very little about motives to action. Still he confesses, somewhat unwillingly, "that there is need of force and fear too, to constrain to obedience, to whom the conscience of duty proveth ineffectual".⁵⁾ Fear is of two kinds, fear of punishment by the state, and fear of punishment in a future life. This latter is supplied by religion, as is also the hope of future rewards, and thus is religion necessary to the practical completion of the ethical system.

Cudworth's more direct criticism of Hobbes is practically the same as that used by Clarke; so much so, that we are led to suspect Clarke intended merely a repetition of Cudworth's arguments in this regard. Hobbes contradicts himself, says Cudworth, when he maintains that "nothing is by nature

¹⁾ Intel. Syst. pp. 896, 897.

²⁾ Ibid. p. 730.

³⁾ Clarke, Nat. Rel. p. 45.

⁴⁾ Intel. Syst. p. 898.

⁵⁾ Ibid. p. 896.

unjust or unlawful", and yet "pretends this to be a law of nature, that men should stand to their pacts and compacts".¹⁾ He further shows that with Hobbes power is the real source of right, and draws the logical conclusion, that "successful and prosperous rebellion and whatsoever can be done by power, will be *ipso facto* thereby justified";²⁾ but maintains on the contrary that right can never be founded in power. Not even Clarke himself exposed the inconsistencies of Hobbes more strongly than did Cudworth. In fact, in certain respects Clarke may be considered a disciple of Cudworth. When it is remembered that Clarke entered Cambridge in 1691, but three years after the death of Cudworth, and that Cambridge was at that time the centre of Neo-Platonic influence in England, it will not seem improbable that Clarke received much from Cudworth, imbibed his philosophical spirit in general, and not a little of his positive teaching.³⁾

Of less importance for our present purpose is Henry More (1614—1687), whose chief ethical work,—“Enchiridion Ethicum”, appeared in 1666, twelve years before Cudworth’s “Intellectual System”. Like Cudworth, he regarded moral truths equally certain and fixed with mathematical truths. With him, as with Cudworth and Clarke, reason is the faculty which perceives eternal truths of every kind, but there is also another faculty, intermediate between reason and the passions which

¹⁾ Intel. Syst. p. 894.

²⁾ Ibid. p. 895.

³⁾ Professor Jodl says,—“Die Verwandtschaft mit Cudworth ist sachlich unleugbar, scheint aber nicht auf unmittelbarer Anregung zu beruhen. Ich finde wenigstens in der ganzen Abhandlung Cudworth nirgends mit Namen genannt”. Gesch. d. Ethik. Vol. I. p. 400. We find the first statement abundantly justified, but not the second. Clarke mentions Cudworth twice in his second Boyle Lecture and once in the first (See Being and Attr. p. 34; Nat. Rel. Pref. p. 8; p. 185); and in reply to a certain critic, speaks of Cudworth as “a much more learned writer than either of us”. The aim and purpose of Clarke’s writings was the same as that of Cudworth, and his general method and results very similar. Cudworth may perhaps be regarded as the founder of the “Intellectual School”, of which Clarke is the most typical representative and most important figure.

is especially concerned with the appreciation of moral good. This he called the "Boniform Faculty", and seems to consider it a sort of auxiliary to reason, to aid in bridging the gulf between mere intellectual perception of moral truth and its application in practical life. More also maintained the identity of virtue and happiness, and did not neglect, as Cudworth seems to have done, to give the *passions* a place in his ethical theory. His "boniform faculty" reminds one of Hutcheson's "Moral sense", and he stands in much the same relation to Cudworth, as Shaftesbury and Hutcheson to Clarke.

IV. *Cumberland* (1632—1719).

Already in the long title of Cumberland's work,¹⁾ we learn it was intended as a refutation of Hobbes' political and ethical philosophy. The arguments he advances are very similar to those of More and Cudworth, although his general philosophic position and method are somewhat different. He thinks the Baconian method applicable to ethics as well as to the natural sciences. By observing external nature we discover its truths and laws, and by studying the nature of man we discover the relations in which he stands to the natural universe of which he forms a part. The foundation of morality lies in the nature of things, antecedent to all positive law, else no reason can be given for the enactment of any law.²⁾ Thus arise the laws of nature, which are at the same time the laws and will of God, and the universal laws of right reason. There are no innate ideas, but by means of the faculty of reason, man perceives the mathematical and moral truths contained in nature, and both are of equal certainty.³⁾ Practical reason

¹⁾ "De legibus naturae disquisitio philosophica, in qua eorum forma, summa capita, ordo, promulgatio et obligatio e rerum natura investigantur; quin etiam elementa philosophiae Hobbianae cum moralis et civilis considerantur et refutantur". Lond. 1672.

²⁾ De leg. Cap. V. § 5.

³⁾ Cap. I. § 8. "Universaliter autem verum est quod non certius fluxus puncti lineam producit, aut additio numerorum summam, quam quod benevolentia effectum praestat bonum". See also Proleg. § 12.

points out the ends to be pursued and the means to those ends, and since reason is common to man, all unprejudiced men agree with regard to the fundamental principles of morals. The mind of man naturally assents to the universal law of nature, which is the law of benevolence.¹⁾ It is thus stated, —“The greatest possible benevolence of every rational agent towards all the rest, constitutes the happiest state of each and all, so far as depends on their own power, and is necessarily required for their happiness, therefore the common good is the supreme law”.²⁾ Not only so, but the good of all is the good of each; while the individual is seeking the happiness of others, he at the same time best promotes his own. Thus the happiness of all is at the same time the end of every rational man’s action and the standard of right and wrong.³⁾ While this law of benevolence is also the law of God, it derives its chief obligation from the fact that only by striving to promote the happiness of all, can a man attain his own. Positive law and religion lend additional strength and sanction to the law of nature by holding forth rewards and punishments in this life and the next; but yet a man, following the social instincts of his own nature, seeks in the first place not his own happiness, but the happiness of others

In opposition to Hobbes, Cumberland asserts that man is not a selfish, but a social being, and in the original state, before war had begun, his social impulses lead him rather to benefit his fellow-men than to destroy them. The pleasant feeling that accompanies benevolent action, the unpleasant feelings that accompany hate and envy, together with the fear of the evils of war, all combine to establish peace and good government. When, however, a sovereign has been set up, Cumberland leaves him with almost as much power as Hobbes’ Leviathan; and, as Professor Robertson says, “the result is Hobbism made altruistic”.⁴⁾

¹⁾ Proleg. IX; also Cap. I. § 15; Cap. III. § 3.

²⁾ Cap. I. § 4.

³⁾ Cap. I. § 22.

⁴⁾ Robertson, — “Hobbes”, p. 219.

Cumberland's chief importance for our purpose rests on his attempt to supply the connecting link between moral perception and moral action by identifying the good of all with the good of each, and in his making the utilitarian principle of the good of all the ethical end and the standard of moral action.¹⁾

V. *Locke* (1632—1704).²⁾

Although one cannot but notice a certain family resemblance between the ethical philosophy of Locke and that of Cumberland and the Cambridge Platonists, he cannot be considered the disciple of any of his predecessors.³⁾ Locke deviates essentially from Cudworth and More in that he altogether denies the existence of innate ideas, and from Cumberland in that he does not so strongly emphasise the identity of virtue and happiness, but founds obligation rather in the will of God, and considers future rewards and punishments an essential element of any ethical system.

Since there are no innate ideas, the ethical system must be based upon observation and experience.⁴⁾ The theory of knowledge, founded on an examination of the facts of consciousness, forms the psychological basis of ethics. Knowledge is "the perception of the agreement or disagreement of two ideas".⁵⁾ Of this knowledge there are three degrees. "Intuitive

¹⁾ Clarke quotes Cumberland frequently, and with great respect, especially with regard to the Law of Nature, the mathematical certainty of moral truth and in criticism of Hobbes. Among other points of agreement may be mentioned the importance both attach to the good of all as the moral standard, and to reason as the moral faculty. On all these points there is much agreement between Cumberland, Clarke, and Locke. Compare, "Natural Religion" pp. 34, 58, 66, 70, 77, 96.

²⁾ Our chief authority for the following account of Locke's ethical opinions, apart from the "Essay concerning human understanding", has been a monogram entitled,—*"An outline of Locke's ethical philosophy"*, by Dr. M. M. Curtis, Leipzig 1890.

³⁾ See Curtis' "Locke's eth. philos." pp. 21, 22. Robertson, "Hobbes", p. 229. Comp. Jodl, "Gesch. d. Philos." Bd. I. p. 152.

⁴⁾ Comp. Fraser's "Selections from Berkeley", p. XV.

⁵⁾ "Essay" Bk. IV. Ch. I. § 2.

knowledge” arises when “the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of two ideas immediately without the intervention of any other”.¹⁾ “Demonstrative knowledge” is the perception of the agreement or disagreement of two ideas through the intervention of a third.²⁾ “Sensitive knowledge” is “the perception of the mind employed about the particular existence of finite beings without us”.³⁾ Corresponding to these three degrees of knowledge there are three fundamental certainties,—the existence of self, of God, and of the world.⁴⁾ Thus we arrive at the three fundamental conceptions of Locke’s ethical system:—Man, God, and Nature. The foundation of morality does not lie in the nature of man alone, but in the nature and character of God, the creator of the universe. God cannot act contrary to his own nature, and so the laws of the universe are as unchangeable as God himself; for the laws of nature are the laws of the divine nature, the will and command of God. Thus the “Law of Nature” is eternal and unchangeable, the rule of God to himself and to all his creatures. Into this divine order man is born, a social being endowed with reason. By means of reason, which is the only ethical faculty, man perceives and recognises the law of nature, which is at the same time the law of God. This moral perception of the law and its sanctions is antecedent to all positive Revelation. In the law of nature reason discovers the foundation of duties and rights. Duties are of three classes,—duty to God, or piety; duty to self, or prudence; and duty to others, under the forms of benevolence, equity and love. These duties are founded on various relations,—piety, on the relation of man to God, the creator and benefactor of all; benevolence, equity and love arise from the various relations in which men stand to one another. The highest of all is the “Law of Love”; “that one should do as he would be done unto”, and Locke thinks from this comprehensive law might be deduced mathe-

¹⁾ Bk. IV. Ch. II. § 1.

²⁾ Bk. IV. Ch. II. § 2.

³⁾ Bk. IV. Ch. II. § 14.

⁴⁾ Curtis’ “Locke’s Eth. Philos.” p. 42.

matically, all the several duties of life. This opinion he shares with Cudworth, More, Cumberland, Clarke, and many other writers of that time. Moral perception, or knowledge of right and wrong is sufficient to induce "men of right reason" to obey the law, for to such men virtue is her own reward. But all men are not so disposed to virtue. Prejudice, and the results of bad education and evil habits, have such power over men that there is need of stronger motives, more powerful sanctions of morality. These are found in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, for here are clearly revealed God, duty, and immortality. Without the supposition of rewards and punishments in a future life, no ethical system can be complete.

Locke gives a very important place to Happiness in his system of ethics. "Good and evil are nothing but pleasure or pain, or that which occasions or procures pleasure or pain to us".¹⁾ "Happiness is the utmost pleasure we are capable of. The highest perfection of intellectual nature lies in a careful and constant pursuit of true happiness".²⁾ Happiness and virtue are one, and form the ethical end, or rather virtue is the ethical end as involving and including happiness. Even in this life it may reasonably be maintained that the virtuous are the most happy; if we consider the future life there can be no question about it.³⁾

Considering reason as the faculty that perceives moral distinctions, and the will as guided and determined by the understanding,⁴⁾ Locke naturally gives a very high place to education. Virtue as including happiness is the end of life,

¹⁾ Bk. II. Ch. 28, § 5 Bk. II. Ch. 20, § 2.

²⁾ Bk. II. Ch. 21, §§ 41—51.

³⁾ Bk. II. Ch. 21, § 70.

⁴⁾ Bk. II. Ch. 21, § 48.—"Were the will determined by anything but the last result of our mind's judging of the good or evil of any action, we were not free". This is the position taken by "A gentleman of the University of Cambridge" in "Letters to Dr. Clarke". Clarke opposes this view. According to him, judgment is passive; action is active; and "there is no connection between them". This is the chief point of divergence between Clarke and Locke.

and education is the means to its attainment. "It is the percipient mind that is to be educated and developed in all its powers, for it is the mind that is to determine all".¹⁾

Dr. Curtis has already shown that Clarke must rather be considered a follower than an opponent of Locke.²⁾ In Chapter III. we shall see how closely Clarke followed Locke in many respects, and how few are the points where their opinions diverge. Clarke quotes "the learned and judicious Mr. Locke" frequently,³⁾ and only once with any degree of disapproval.⁴⁾ Yet Clarke's system, although in the main agreeing with that of Locke, is by no means identical with it. Clarke lays more stress than Locke, on the nature and difference of things as the foundation of moral distinctions, and less on the will of a divine lawgiver.⁵⁾ He differs from Locke with regard to the freedom of the will, denying that the will always follows the "last judgment of the understanding";⁶⁾ and he takes more positive ground than Locke in regard to the "natural immortality of the soul".⁷⁾

CHAPTER II.

CLARKE.

1. *Life and works.*⁸⁾

Samuel Clarke was born at Norwich in the year 1675. In the year 1691 he entered the University of Cambridge,

¹⁾ Curtis' "Locke's eth. philos.", p. 98.

²⁾ Ib. p. 138. Comp. Jodl, "Gesch. d. Ethik" Bd. I. C. V.

³⁾ "Nat. Rel." pp. IV., 34, 45, 123. "Letter to Dodwell", pp. 161, 167, 180, 229, 232, 243.

⁴⁾ "Leibniz and Clarke" pp. 9, 11.

⁵⁾ Nat. Rel. pp. 68, 70, 84, 88, 89.

⁶⁾ "Being and Att. of God" p. 93. "Letters concerning liberty and necessity"; "Remarks on a Bk. entitled, a phil. enquiry concerning human liberty".

⁷⁾ "Letter to Dodwell"; and the consequent discussion with Collins.

⁸⁾ Our chief authority for the account here given is the life of Clarke by Benj. Hoadly, Bishop of Salisbury, prefixed to Vol. I of the folio edition

where he remained during some seven years, and where he is said to have distinguished himself by "his thirst after true knowledge, and his great capacity both for discovering and improving it".¹⁾ Here he became acquainted with the Cartesian philosophy, but also with the recent discoveries of Newton, then only known to a few. Wishing to spread the knowledge of Newton's physical discoveries, in the year 1697 Clarke brought out a new Latin translation of the Cartesian Robault's "La Physique", with notes from a Newtonian standpoint.²⁾ This was Clarke's first work; it passed through several editions, and was used as a text-book at Cambridge until superseded by Newton's own writings. Although continuing to take a keen interest in scientific work, Clarke decided to enter the Church, and devoted himself chiefly to theological studies, especially to the Hebrew and Greek of the Old and New Testaments, and the writings of the early Church Fathers. In the year 1699 he published "Three practical essays on baptism, confirmation and repentance", and in the same year appeared his first attack on the Deists, in which he attempts to refute Toland's criticism of some of the apocryphal gospels.³⁾ Two years later appeared the first part of his "Paraphrase on the four Evangelists".⁴⁾ Soon after, through the influence of

of Clarke's works. Dublin 1734. See also *Encycl. Britt.*, Art. "Clarke", by Prof. Flint. Also "Forty Sermons on doctrinal and practical subjects selected from the works of the Rev. Sam'l Clarke, by the Rev. Sam'l Clapham; to which is prefaced a sketch of his life". Lond. 1806. Whiston's "Historical memoirs of the life of the Rev. Dr. Sam'l Clarke", Lond. 1730, we have been unable to consult.

¹⁾ Hoadly, "Life of Clarke" p. V.

²⁾ "Jacobi Rohaulti Physica, Latine vertit, recensuit, et uberioribus jam Annotationibus ex illustrissimi Isaaci Newtoni Philosophia maximam partem haustis, amplificavit et ornavit S. Clarke".

³⁾ "Some reflections on that part of a book called Amyntor, or the defence of Milton's life, which relates to the writings of the Primitive Fathers and the Canon of the New Testament". Lond. 1699.

⁴⁾ "A Paraphrase on the four Evangelists, where for the clearer understanding of the Sacred History the whole text and paraphrase are printed in separate columns, over against each other. Together with critical notes on the more difficult passages".

Dr. John Moore, Bishop of Norwich, whose Chaplain he had been since leaving the University, he received the Rectory of Drayton. In 1704 the trustees of the Boyle Lecture Fund appointed him to deliver the Lecture for that year. Clarke seemed to think the objects of the "Foundation"¹⁾ could not be better furthered than by proving the "Existence and Attributes of God", which he considered the foundation of all true religion. Thus appeared his "Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God".²⁾ Re-appointed the next year, he preached another series of eight sermons, his "Discourse concerning the unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion".³⁾ These are Clarke's chief works, and form the ground of whatever claim he has to recognition as a philosopher. They were at first published separately, but afterwards together; passed through several editions in Clarke's lifetime; were each time carefully revised and altered by himself; and thus, of all his philosophical works, they are most to be relied upon in any study of Clarke's philosophy.

Again, through his unfailing friend Bishop Moore, Clarke was appointed Rector of St. Bennet's Paul's Wharf, and some time after was made Chaplain to the Queen and Rector of St. James' Westminster. In the year 1706 the learned non-juror Henry Dodwell⁴⁾ published an "Epistolary Discourse", in which he endeavoured to prove that the soul of man is not naturally immortal but receives immortality upon baptism. Not only Dissenters, but moderate churchmen and even Dodwell's

¹⁾ These lectures were founded in 1691 by the will of Robert Boyle, and were intended for "the demonstration of the truth of the Christian Religion against Atheists, Theists, Pagans, Jews and Mohammedans".

²⁾ "A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God; more particularly in answer to Mr. Hobbes, Spinoza, and their followers. Wherein the Notion of Liberty is stated; and the Possibility and Certainty of it proved, in opposition to Necessity and Fate". By Samuel Clarke D. D. Rector of St. James' Westminster.

³⁾ "A Discourse concerning the unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation".

⁴⁾ Of Dodwell, Gibbon says, "his learning was immense, and his skill in employing facts was equal to his learning".

own friends were scandalized at such absurdities. Among other serious protests against these opinions, appeared Clarke's "Letter to Mr. Dodwell",¹⁾ in which he endeavoured to show from the authority of the Fathers as well as from Reason, the weakness of Dodwell's position. Dodwell found a strong supporter in Anthony Collins, who denied on general philosophical ground the immortality of the soul and the freedom of the will. Clarke replied to him in four letters, with arguments Bishop Hoadly declares "comprehend all that the ancients had said well, and add still more evidence than ever clearly appeared before". Shortly after his appointment as Rector of St. James' Westminster, for the degree of Doctor of Divinity at Cambridge, Clarke defended two very characteristic theses. The are as follows,—(1.) "Nullum Fidei Christianae Dogma, in S. Scripturis traditum, est Rectae Rationi dissentaneum". (2.) "Sine Actionum humanarum Libertate nulla potest esse Religio". These opinions, however much they might please latitudinarian Churchmen such as Whiston and Hoadly, were not received by all with the same approval, and when in 1712 Clarke published his "Scriptural Doctrine of the Trinity", he was suspected of heresy and complaint was laid before the Lower House of Convocation. Clarke gave certain explanations, and the matter dropped, but among the more strict Churchmen he continued to be regarded with suspicion as altogether too rationalistic to be strictly orthodox.

Clarke, in common with most theologians of his day, was often engaged in controversy, and here his great logical skill generally gave him a considerable advantage over his opponents. His "Being and Attributes" was strongly criticised in a series of five letters, written in the Winter of 1713—14 by Butler, then a student in a Dissenting Academy at Tewkesbury. Clarke wrote five letters in reply, and Butler seems to have been satisfied with the answers, although he confesses he does not understand Clarke's theory of time and space. In the year

¹⁾ "A letter to Mr. Dodwell, wherein all the arguments in his Epistolary Discourse against the immortality of the soul are particularly answered, and the judgment of the Fathers concerning the matter truly represented".

1715, Collins published his "Philosophical enquiry concerning Human Liberty", a most powerful defence of the necessitarian position. To this Clarke replied in his "Remarks",¹⁾ and this short reply, together with his "Letters concerning Liberty and Necessity",²⁾ contains his chief contribution to the literature of this time-honoured subject. In the Autumn of the same year began Clarke's famous controversy with Leibniz,³⁾ which lasted until broken off by the death of Leibniz in the following year. The controversy was begun by Leibniz at the request of the Princess of Wales, Caroline of Ansbach, and by her Clarke was chosen as the Englishman best fitted to answer the great German philosopher. In his first letter Leibniz attacked Locke and English philosophy in general, and Sir Isaac Newton in particular. Clarke as a friend and adherent of Newton, defended him on every point. In subsequent letters subjects more strictly philosophical, as the Freedom of the Will, were introduced. After five letters and as many replies had been exchanged, further controversy was prevented by the death of Leibniz. This was the last of Clarke's philosophical writings.

Among his other works may be mentioned a folio edition of Caesar's Commentaries, with notes; and the first twelve books of Homer's Iliad with a translation and critical notes. Of these Martineau says,—“If these editions had appeared before the age of Bentley, they might have had some prospect of more durable reputation; but the rapid advance of modern scholarship has left them far behind, and they now remain chiefly as witnesses of the large and liberal culture of a mind

¹⁾ "Remarks upon a Book entitled a Philosophical Enquiry concerning Human Liberty". Collins, perhaps fearing persecution for heresy, did not reply until after Clarke's death in 1729, when he published his "Liberty and Necessity".

²⁾ "Letters to Dr. Clarke concerning Liberty and Necessity; from a Gentleman of the University of Cambridge". Lond. 1717.

³⁾ "A collection of papers which passed between the late learned Mr. Leibniz, and Dr. Clarke, in the years 1715 and 1716, relating to the principles of Natural Philosophy and Religion". Lond. 1717.

more scientific than critical".¹⁾ As a proof of Clarke's continued interest in scientific studies may be mentioned his Latin translation of Newton's Optics, prepared at the request of the author. Clarke's sermons were published after his death in two folio volumes, containing one hundred and seventy-three long discourses.²⁾ They are very carefully written, full of quotations from Scripture, and frequently refer to the ethical subjects treated in his Boyle lectures. The ethical theory they contain is the same as that more systematically given in the "Boyle Lectures"; consequently they are of little importance for our present purpose.

Although church preferment was offered to Clarke, he refused to accept it, and remained Rector of St. Jame's Westminster until his death in 1729. Hoadly speaks in the highest terms of his consistent life, and says "he endeavoured to live out the principles he taught". He appears to have enjoyed a very high reputation for learning on almost every subject, and his opinions on matters philosophical were sought by such men as Butler, Hutcheson, Kames and Collier. He had many friends and warm admirers among both scientists and theologians, and Bishop Hoadly declared it his highest wish, that he might be remembered "in ages to come, under the character of the Friend of Dr. Clarke".

NB. In referring to the works of Clarke we have in general used abbreviations:—*B. & Att.*, for "Being and Attributes of God", the first Boyle lecture; *N. R.*, for the "Discourse concerning the obligations of Natural Religion"; *Leibn. & Cl.*, for Clarke's correspondence with Leibniz; *Let. Dodw.*, for "A letter to Mr. Dodwell &c."; *Remarks*, for "Remarks on a Book &c."; *Letters*, for "Several letters to Dr. Clarke &c.".

¹⁾ "Types of Ethical Theory" p. 463.

²⁾ "One hundred and seventy-three Sermons on several Subjects and Occasions, in two Volumes; by Samuel Clarke D. D., late Rector of St. James' Westminster". Published from the Author's Manuscript by John Clarke D. D., Dean of Sarum. Dublin, 1734. The John Clarke here mentioned was the son of Samuel Clarke. He afterwards became Prebendary of Canterbury and Chaplain to the queen, and, curiously enough, preached the Boyle lectures for 1719 and 1720, his subject being "An Enquiry into the cause and Origin of Natural and Moral Evil".

II. *Influences from various quarters.*

As we have endeavoured to show in Chapter I., Clarke was most directly influenced by previous English ethical philosophers. He belongs in general to the school of Cudworth, Cumberland and Locke. His conception of the importance of Ethics, his attempt to reduce morals to an exact science, his method of investigation, and the results he announced, were all very similar to those of his predecessors. Yet it is impossible to assert with any degree of assurance, that Clarke was a disciple of Locke or Cumberland or even of Cudworth. Neither is it possible to say he was a Platonist, or a follower of Aristotle, or a Stoic. To none of these schools can he be said to have attached himself completely, although they all doubtless exerted their influence upon him. He quotes frequently from all the prominent philosophers of antiquity and from most of the modern philosophers. Wherever he can find an opinion to support his own, he uses it with thanks, especially if the writer quoted belongs to one of his favorite schools of thought. He is always ready with an apt quotation from Plato, Cicero, Epictetus, and frequently from Aristotle, and in his theological discussions he refers often to Origen, Lactantius and many of the Church Fathers besides. Yet Clarke is by no means an eclectic. He is rather, if we leave the subjective factor out of account, a product of the times in which he lived. All that can be done towards estimating the influence of previous ethical writers upon Clarke, is to show a few analogies between their ideas and his, as we have already done in the case of his chief predecessors in English Ethics.

A. Ancient writers.

Although, as Clarke says, the ancient philosophers failed to reform mankind, yet many of them "gave to the world admirable systems of Ethics, of excellent use and benefit to the generations wherein they lived, and deservedly of great value and esteem even unto this day".¹⁾ Of these, the most

¹⁾ Nat. Rel. p. 133.

important in Clarke's estimation, are Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Epictetus and Antoninus.¹⁾ Considering the similarity between Clarke's ethical system and that of Cudworth, and in view of the fact that Clarke was educated at Cambridge, it is not surprising that he frequently quotes from the works of Plato. With Socrates, Clarke is inclined to assert the identity of knowledge and virtue; for as Socrates based morality on knowledge, so Clarke makes it rest on the perception of moral truth as manifested in the difference and fitness of things. For men of right reason it was sufficient to perceive the truth, and right action would follow as a matter of course. For Clarke as for Socrates, the good, the beautiful and the useful are identical, and in the ethics of both, virtue is regarded as teachable. Plato places the highest good in the greatest possible likeness to God, and happiness consists in the possession of the Good; while Clarke says the chief good lies in the imitation of God, which includes also the greatest happiness. Virtue, according to Plato, is the fitness of the soul to the performance of its proper work; according to Clarke, virtue is the conformity of the soul's life and actions to the "eternal fitness of things". Clarke's eulogy of "Universal Justice" is in the very words of Plato, and he quotes from the works of Plato²⁾ in support of many less important parts of his ethical theory. With Aristotle Clarke shows less affinity, although he often quotes his opinion,³⁾ especially where it coincides with his own.

Of all ancient philosophers he is most in sympathy with the Stoics, and with those writers who were most influenced by the Stoical philosophy. For Clarke, "Moral virtue is the foundation and the sum, the essence and the life of all true religion".⁴⁾ Therefore Ethics is the chief of all sciences, and all other sciences, including Mathematics and Natural Philo-

¹⁾ Nat. Rel. pp. 138—153.

²⁾ Comp. Nat. Rel. pp. 44, 48, 55, 64, 69, 119, 133, 139, 141, 157, 298.

³⁾ Comp. Nat. Rel. pp. 36, 56, 85, 126, 132, 139; Being and Attr. pp. 28, 31, 76.

⁴⁾ Nat. Rel. p. 90.

sophy, derive their chief value from the fact that they contribute largely to ethical knowledge. Speaking of Newton, Clarke says,—“the foundations of natural religion have never been so deeply and so firmly laid as in the mathematical and experimental philosophy of that great man”.¹⁾ With Clarke, as with the Stoics, Philosophy was of value only in so far as it lead to the practise of virtue; it is knowledge as applied to action that is of use to mankind. Indirectly from the Stoics, directly and chiefly through Cicero, the Roman Jurists and Hugo Grotius, Hobbes and the English ethical philosophers of his century would seem to have derived the conception of the Law of Nature. For the Stoics, human nature was but a part of universal nature. The Law of Nature was therefore the law for man, and to live according to nature was to fulfil the end of his being and to lead a virtuous life. Reason in man and the reason in the universe are one and the same thing. Very similar to this is the Philosophy of Clarke. The universe is reasonable, for it has God as its creator. In the nature of things are certain fitnesses and unfitnesses, and these, perceived by the mind of man, become for him the rule of action, the Law of Nature. Virtue is conformity of life and action with the nature of things. Clarke even goes so far as to say, with the Stoics, that virtue is worthy to be chosen for its own sake alone, and the man of right reason will chose virtue for this reason alone; yet he denies the Stoical assertion of the self-sufficiency of virtue. The virtuous are not always the most happy in this world, and although it be reasonable to choose virtue, men cannot be expected to choose it, if it be not rewarded with happiness. The Stoics could not reconcile this apparent contradiction between reason and reasonable desire for happiness; the reconciliation could only be made in view of the immortality of the soul and the rewards and punishments of a future life. Clarke’s division of actions into good, bad and indifferent is similar to that of the Stoics. The Stoical virtue of Insight or Practical Wisdom (*φρόνησις*),

¹⁾ Dedication of Clarke’s correspondence with Leibniz.

is similar to Clarke's Moral Perception, and the Stoical virtues of Moderation and Justice remind one of Clarke's Sobriety or duty to self, and Equity or duty towards others. Clarke's Moral Perception lies at the foundation of all virtue, as the necessary condition of virtuous action, and Zeno reduces all the virtues to Insight. Clarke's treatment of the Passions is also similar to that of the Stoics. Passion and prejudice blind the moral eyesight, so that men do not perceive moral distinctions, and even when they do perceive them, the passions hinder right action. The less a man is ruled by his passions the more he is a free agent. Finally, Clarke, like the Stoics, makes the ethical end not the welfare of the individual, nor of the nation, but of all mankind, and in view of this he would also declare the highest work of man is not contemplation but action.

Clarke quotes occasionally from Chrysippus, Seneca and Epictetus, but it would appear to have been from Cicero that he chiefly acquired his admiration for the Stoical philosophy. Cicero, Clarke says, was "the greatest and best philosopher that Rome, or perhaps any other nation ever produced".¹⁾ He delights in quoting the opinions of "Tully", especially with regard to the Law of Nature,²⁾ the excellence of virtue,³⁾ the existence of God,⁴⁾ and the immortality of the soul.⁵⁾ He is especially pleased when he can quote Cicero in opposition to Hobbes, to show that the Law of Nature is antecedent to all positive law, and that mankind is naturally inclined to benevolence.⁶⁾ Next to Cicero, among Stoically inclined writers, Clarke most frequently mentions the apologete Lactantius, whose "*Institutiones Divinae*", was written in the early part of the fourth century A. D.⁷⁾ In 1685, but six years

¹⁾ Nat. Rel. p. 141.

²⁾ Ib. pp. 54, 65, 67, 128.

³⁾ Ib. pp. 46, 49, 55, 72, 73.

⁴⁾ Ib. pp. 15, 16, 18, 52, 139.

⁵⁾ Ib. pp. 116, 115, 111, 112, 118, 145.

⁶⁾ Ib. pp. 60, 61, 67.

⁷⁾ Ueberweg-Heinze Bd. II. pp. 82—87.

before Clarke entered the University, a new edition of the "Institutiones" was published at Cambridge, and in the extensive studies Clarke made of the "primitive Christian writers", it is probable Lactantius received much attention.¹⁾ In fact Clarke is more allied to Lactantius than to any of the heathen Stoics, not excepting Cicero. The general philosophical and religious positions of Lactantius and Clarke were the same. Both were apologetic writers,—Lactantius in opposition to the heathen critics of his day, Clarke in opposition to the Deists. In common with the Stoics both gave the highest place to Ethics, for true Ethics and true Religion are inseparable, and the end and objects of both is the reformation of mankind. This Reformation the heathen Philosophy had failed to accomplish, for lack of divine revelation. Although all or nearly all the teachings of Christ are to be found scattered through the writings of the ancient philosophers, yet no one united them all as did Christ. Hence the superiority of the Christian revelation. Yet Christianity is reasonable, and capable of reasoned proof. Its teachings when once known are accepted by the reason because they agree with it, although unaided reason could not have discovered them. Thus it is with the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Lactantius says,—"*declaravi ut opinor animam non esse solubilem*", and Clarke strenuously supports the "natural immortality of the soul".²⁾ Lactantius' division of duty into duty to God and duty to man is the same with that of Clarke. Both writers deny that virtue is self-sufficient to its own happiness. Virtue, with them, is only the means to the attainment of the Chief Good, and this Chief Good is not to be found in this life but in the life to come.

B. Descartes and English Science.

Of Robert Boyle it has been said, "he was the first great investigator who carried out in his labours the principles of the *Novum Organon*".³⁾ So attached was Boyle to the Baconian

¹⁾ Hoadly's Life of Clarke p. VII.

²⁾ Letter to Dodwell.

³⁾ Encycl. Britt. Art. 'Robert Boyle'.

philosophy and method, that for many years he refused to read the works of Descartes. This position of Boyle towards the new philosophy represents the general antagonism of English thinkers to accepting the conclusions of Descartes. Leslie Stephen says,—“In England the philosophical impulse of Descartes made no distinguished disciples”.¹⁾ Yet the Natural Philosophy of Descartes was introduced into England and became generally accepted, especially at the Universities. Clarke, as we have seen, made himself acquainted as well with the Cartesian “Physics”, as with the newer system of Newton. This careful study of mathematical and physical science was not without its influence upon him. He believed the Newtonian conception of the universe gave the world loftier ideas of God the creator, and great aid and support to Religion and Morality. None the less did the study of Mathematics, the most exact of all the sciences, exert its influence upon Clarke, as upon Cudworth, More, Cumberland, and even Locke, in regard to the method of Ethics. Mathematical certainty was what they desired to attain. Locke believed in the possibility of an exact science of Ethics, but left the work to someone else. Clarke believed in it, and straightway undertook to demonstrate with mathematical exactitude the existence of God and the obligations of Natural Religion.

Although in general Clarke repudiates the doctrines of Descartes in Philosophy as well as in Physics, they were not without their influence upon him. As Leslie Stephen says, the spirit of Cartesianism “expresses itself in particular in the theology of the rationalizing school”.²⁾ To this school Clarke belongs. A partial Cartesian like Pascal, could accept the double-truth theory,—“La nature confond les pyrrhoniens, et la raison confond les dogmatistes”.³⁾ Clarke is more Cartesian than the Cartesians. “No article of the Christian faith”, he asserts, “is disagreeable to right reason”.⁴⁾ Thus, like Locke,

¹⁾ Engl. thought in the 18th Cent. p. 32.

²⁾ “Engl. thought in the 18th Cent.” p. 33.

³⁾ Pascal, “Pensées”, 2de Partie Art. I.

⁴⁾ Hoadly's Life of Clarke p. XI.

he proceeds to show the "Reasonableness of Christianity", in much the same spirit as that of Toland, when he wrote his "Christianity not mysterious".

But not only the general spirit of Clarke's writings shows Cartesian influence, for some of his arguments are distinctly Cartesian. Both experience and reason combine to convince us of the reality of the material world, yet there is no complete demonstration of its existence. "There always remains a possibility, that the supreme being may have so framed my mind, as that I shall always necessarily be deceived in every one of my perceptions as in a dream, tho' possibly there be no material world, nor any other creature whatever existing besides myself".¹⁾ But from my knowledge of the character of God, I know he never would so deceive his creatures. Therefore the material world exists. Clarke applies the same argument to prove the Freedom of the Will. Consciousness tells us we are free; then if God has not deceived us, we really are free.²⁾ Clarke's conception of matter and mind is the same with that of Descartes. Matter and mind are distinct from one another in all their properties. Therefore there can be no point of contact between them. How then does the body act upon the soul? Clarke gives the answer of the "Occasionalists". He says,—"the power by which matter acts upon the soul is not a real quality inhering in matter, as *motion* inheres in it, and as *thinking* inheres in the thinking substance; but 'tis only a *power* or *occasion* of exciting certain modes or sensations in another substance".³⁾ This argument or explanation Clarke also applies to the Freedom of the Will. The mind acts from motives, but motives are not the causes of the action. A motive, or a judgment is a passive state of the soul; action is an active state. "Nothing that is passive can ever be the cause of anything that is active. An *occasion*, indeed, it may be, and action may be consequent upon perception or judgment,

¹⁾ "Remarks on a Book" p. 20.

²⁾ "Remarks" p. 20.

³⁾ "Letter to Dodwell" p. 219.

and yet there be no manner of physical or necessary connection between them".¹⁾

C. Rationalistic theology.

Clarke was by no means the first English theologian to maintain the reasonableness of Christianity. In this he had been preceded by many of the most prominent Churchmen of the 17th century. Among these we may mention Chillingworth, Tillotson, Stillingfleet, Whiston and Hoadly,²⁾ all of whom, save Chillingworth, were educated at Cambridge. Intellectually and religiously they are allied to such men as Cudworth, More, Culverwell, Cumberland, Locke and Newton, on the one hand, and to the Deists on the other. On the one hand they adhered to the Church, and were in general fairly orthodox; on the other they accepted the Deistic position that faith must be tested by reason. Christianity for them was reasonable, and its truth capable of being demonstrated by reason, or at least not contrary to reason. Yet they laid more stress on right living than on subscription to creeds. Their religion was ethical, and ethics the chief part of religion.

Chillingworth, a contemporary of Descartes and Herbert of Cherbury, may perhaps be considered the father of English rationalistic theology. For him reason and the progress of science could only aid in establishing upon a securer foundation the truths of Revelation. He pleaded for religious toleration. He argued against the tyranny of creeds. His whole creed is thus tersely expressed,—“I am fully assured that God does not, and that men ought not to require any more of any man, than this, to believe the Scripture to be God’s word, to endeavour to find the true sense of it, and to live according to it”. He was accused of Socinianism, but, as Tillotson says, “for no other cause but his worthy and successful attempts to make the Christian religion reasonable”. Tillotson was the son of a Puritan, but through the influence of Chillingworth was inclined towards the established church, and was among those who complied with

¹⁾ “Remarks” p. 10.

²⁾ See *En cycl. Britt.*, Art’s Chillingworth, Tillotson &c.

the Act of Conformity. At Cambridge he came in contact with Cudworth. He devoted himself with especial zeal to the study of ancient ethics, and the writings of the Fathers. His chief reputation rests on his preaching, and this was simple and practical rather than theological. Although suspected of being latitudinarian, he was much engaged in controversy against "atheists" and Roman Catholics.

Stillingfleet was perhaps the least rationalistic of all, although also educated under the influence of the Cambridge Platonists. Like most of the prominent theologians of his day, he was engaged in incessant controversy and is now chiefly remembered for his polemic against Locke. Whiston and Hoadly were close friends of Clarke; both survived him, and both wrote accounts of his life. The eccentric Whiston was mathematician as well as theologian, and succeeded Newton as Lucasian professor of Mathematics at Cambridge. According to him, Arianism was the creed of the primitive Church, and in this opinion he was largely followed by Clarke and Hoadly. For this and other heresy he was deprived of his professorship and expelled from the University. Of Hoadly, the originator of the famous Bangorian Controversy, Leslie Stephen says, "he was probably the best hated clergyman of the century among his own order".¹⁾ Because of his opposition to the authority of the Church over the individual conscience, his High-Church critic William Law tries to show he ought to accept the Deistic position and deny also the authority of Scripture. Although Hoadly would by no means do this, he is perhaps even more rationalistic than Clarke.

Such were some of Clarke's predecessors and more immediate friends. It would not be difficult to show that, although bitter opponents of Deism, they did much to further the opinions they assailed. Collins spoke of Tillotson as "one whom all English free-thinkers own as their head", and satirically asserted that "nobody doubted the existence of the Deity until the Boyle lectures had undertaken to prove

¹⁾ Engl. thought in the 18th Cent. Vol. II. pp. 152—167.

it".¹⁾ In fact, the theologians of the school of Clarke stood together with the Deists in their protest against mere belief, and in asserting Religion to be a life, rather than a creed. It was an ethical movement on both sides, and Clarke well expresses the position of the latitudinarian divines, when he says, in words any Deist might have used,—“Moral virtue is the foundation and the sum, the essence and the life of all true religion”.²⁾

D. The Deists.³⁾

Herbert of Cherbury, a contemporary of Chillingworth and Descartes, has been called the Father of Deism. He might almost as well be called the Father of English rationalistic Theology.⁴⁾ He represents the positive or ethical side of Deism, as Toland and Collins the negative or critical side. He bases his philosophy and religion on a survey of “the nature, foundation and limits of human knowledge”. With him, reason is the ultimate court of appeal. His five innate principles, or “*notitiae communes*” thus found, would have been assented to by Clarke or any other divine of his school. They are as follows,—(1.) There is one supreme God. (2.) He is to be worshipped. (3.) Worship consists chiefly in virtue and piety. (4.) We must repent of our sins and forsake them. (5.) There are rewards and punishments here and hereafter.⁵⁾ These are truths common to all religions and all times, and are the essential elements of all religion. Such were the more positive teachings of Deism. The rationalistic theologians

¹⁾ Leslie Stephen, “Engl. thought &c.” Vol I p. So.

²⁾ Nat. Rel. p. 90.

³⁾ Encycl. Britt. Art. ‘Deists’, by D. Patrick. Leslie Stephen, “Engl. thought in the 18th Cent.”

⁴⁾ Herbert’s chief work was entitled,—“*Tractatus de veritate prout distinguitur a revelatione, a verisimili a possibili et a falso*”. Paris 1624.

⁵⁾ (1.) *Esse aliquod supremum numen.* (2.) *Numen illud coli debere.* (2.) *Virtutem cum pietate conjunctam optimam esse rationem cultus divini.* (4.) *Respicendum esse a peccatis.* (5.) *Dari praeium vel poenam post hanc vitam transactam.*

could find no fault with these, and it was not against such teaching that their attacks were directed.

Herbert had scarcely at all criticised the Christian Revelation, but he laid the foundation for such criticism. If true religion had always existed in the world, and if morality was the essence of this natural religion, where was the need of a special revelation? Once this question was asked it was not long before doubt began to be cast upon the Bible, especially in regard to the miracles it relates. Thus appeared the negative side of Deism. Deists, such as Blount, Toland and Collins almost forgot the ethical side of their doctrine in incessant theological disputes, criticism of miracles, and a general denial of the Christian Revelation. It was this critical Deism which stirred up Clarke to write his second Boyle lecture. The first lecture had been directed against Spinoza and Hobbes, men who, as Clarke thought, altogether denied the "Existence and Attributes of God". But the Deists did not deny this. In fact, so far as mere "Natural Religion" is concerned, the best of the Deists differed but little from Clarke himself. His description of the "fourth class of Deists", is evidence enough of this.¹⁾ He says they entirely agree with him, as to the "Existence and Attributes of God", the obligations of natural religion, the immortality of the Soul, and the certainty of future rewards and punishments. Reason too, with both is the last test of truth. Clarke then tries to show that the Deists, admitting all this, are most inconsistent in not also admitting the truth of the Christian Revelation. The purpose of his work is to establish a consistent chain of reasoning, leading from the assumption of the Existence of God to the necessary admission of the truth of Revelation. His object is to support Revelation upon rationalistic principles. His ethical theory is a part of the general plan, and must be considered in its relation to the whole. The chain of argument Clarke thus outlines,²⁾—"He who believes the Being and Attributes

¹⁾ Nat. Rel. pp. 22—26.

²⁾ Ib. p. 28.

of God must of necessity (as has been shown in my former discourse), confess his moral attributes also. Next he who owns, and has just notions of the moral attributes of God, cannot avoid acknowledging the obligations of morality and natural religion. In like manner, he who owns the obligations of morality and natural religion, must needs to support these obligations, and make them effectual in practise, believe a future state of rewards and punishments. And finally, he who believes both the obligations of natural religion and the certainty of a future state of rewards and punishments, has no manner of reason left why he should reject the Christian Revelation”.

CHAPTER III.

THE ETHICAL THEORY.

I. The general plan and method.

The two Boyle lectures, delivered by Clarke in the years 1704 and 1705, were intended by him to form a complete demonstration of the truth of the Christian religion,¹⁾ as opposed to the atheism, as Clarke calls it, of Spinoza, the political egoistic absolutism of Hobbes, and the rationalistic Deism of Herbert and Toland. His system might be called rationalistic Christianity, for it is upon the principles of reason alone that he attempts to prove the existence of God and the truth of the Christian revelation.

In the first lecture, by a series of twelve propositions he endeavours to prove the existence of the one, eternal, unchangeable, self-existent, infinite, intelligent God, and to show that this Being must be, and is, a free and voluntary agent, of infinite power, wisdom, goodness, justice, truth, “and all other moral perfections, such as become the supreme governor and judge of the world”.²⁾ Believing himself to have

¹⁾ Nat. Rel. p. 3.

²⁾ Ib. p. 3.

“laid firmly the first foundations of religion in the certainty of the existence and attributes of God”,¹⁾ and “from the most uncontestable principles of right reason”,²⁾ in his second lecture he proceeds “to demonstrate in the next place the unalterable obligations of natural religion and the certainty of divine revelation”.³⁾ This demonstration is contained in a series of fifteen propositions. The first seven deal with the obligations of natural religion and contain the greater part of Clarke’s ethical theory. They are preparatory to the propositions that follow. These latter deal with the “truth and certainty of the Christian revelation;” they depend upon the former propositions and are supplementary to them. Thus, although Clarke’s theology is ethical throughout, his ethical theory is dependent on the proof of the existence of God, and is incomplete without the supposition of the truth of the Christian revelation. Clarke’s method is practically the same in the two works. In his “Demonstration of the being and attributes of God” the reasoning is chiefly *a priori*, with a successive dependence of succeeding propositions on those going before, not unlike the “Ethics” of Spinoza. To prove, however, that the one infinite self-existent Being is also intelligent, he is obliged to fall back upon the *a posteriori* proof from the evidence of design and intelligence in created things.⁴⁾ Then resuming the *a priori* argument he proceeds to show that the other divine attributes follow necessarily from those already known. In the second treatise he admits that the same exactness of demonstration is impossible from the nature of the subject,⁵⁾ but endeavours to use the same method so far as possible. The only condition he lays down to his opponents is that they endeavour to divest themselves of prejudices, especially those arising from the use of an unphilosophical terminology.⁶⁾

¹⁾ N. R. p. 1.

²⁾ B. & Att. p. 7.

³⁾ N. R. p. 3.

⁴⁾ B. & Att. p. 48 (prop. VII).

⁵⁾ N. R. p. 11. Comp. Aristotle, Nic. Eth. Bk. IV. Ch. III.

⁶⁾ B. & Att. p. 8.

II. *The Difference of Things.*

"That there are differences of things, and different relations, respects or proportions of some things towards others, is as evident and undeniable as that one magnitude is greater, equal to, or smaller than another".¹⁾ This is the fundamental conception of Clarke's ethical theory. Many previous philosophers had written much concerning the Law of Nature, and yet it remained a very vague and indefinite conception, capable of many interpretations, a common element in the most widely differing systems. It remained to be explained how Nature expressed or manifested the law, what the exact content of that law was, and how man perceived his obligation to obey its commands. The first of these difficulties Clarke attempted to solve by declaring the law to be contained in Nature by virtue of the differences of things. "The existence of those things themselves, whose properties and relations we consider, depends entirely on the mere arbitrary will and good pleasure of God, — — —. But when these things are created, and so long as it pleases God to continue them in their being, their proportions, which are abstractly of eternal necessity, are also in the things themselves absolutely unalterable".²⁾ Thus in the last analysis the will of the Creator is the foundation of morality, but this consideration Clarke somewhat inconsistently leaves entirely in the background. Things must be taken as they are, and so long as things exist, their differences form the basis of obligation, the law of Nature declared to man, and the rule which God himself always observes in the government of the world.

Although Clarke gives no definition of the word "*thing*", he uses it in its widest sense to mean whatever exists or may be thought of as existing.³⁾ He makes a distinction between things natural or mathematical, and things moral.⁴⁾ Among

¹⁾ N. R. p. 29.

²⁾ Ib. p. 69.

³⁾ Ib. pp. 29, 30, 33, 35.

⁴⁾ Ib. p. 45. On p. 27 and elsewhere we find a similar distinction drawn between the natural and the moral attributes of God. Morality has

things natural, he mentions mathematical figures, numbers, quantities, weights, natural powers, light, darkness, colors.¹⁾ It is not with things natural that the moral philosopher has to do, but with things moral. Under things moral, Clarke includes persons, actions and circumstances.²⁾ The last two are *things*, only with reference to the first. Actions are actions of persons, circumstances are circumstances of persons. Therefore things moral are in reality only persons, in their various relations to themselves and other persons.³⁾

The proportions and relations existing between things natural, are admitted to be "eternal and unchangeable".⁴⁾ None the less are the relations between things moral "eternal and unchangeable".⁵⁾ Persons differ with regard to their qualifications, and in their relations to one another. Thus God is the supreme author and creator of the universe; man is the thing created, and stands in a relation of inferiority and dependence to God.⁶⁾ Men also differ among themselves with regard to their character and powers, and from these differences arise many and various relations. Such are the relations between superiors and inferiors, magistrate and criminal.⁷⁾ There are also differences between actions⁸⁾ viewed with re-

to do with action; therefore things moral can only be persons, or conscious free-agents. Without freedom there is no action, and therefore no morality. In the wider sense the term *natural* includes all things. See also B. & Att. pp. 110—113.

¹⁾ N. R. pp. 30, 31, 32, 36, 41.

²⁾ Ib. pp. 29, 30.

³⁾ Clarke defines *person* as a "self-conscious substance". He does not say whether he would include the lower animals under this category, but we think he would not. Remembering that only of free persons can we predicate morality, Carke might define "Ethics", as the science of the relations which ought to subsist between persons.

⁴⁾ N. R. p. 30. As an example we might give the axiom in geometry that two straight lines cannot enclose a space. Newton's "Laws of Motion" would also illustrate Clarke's meaning.

⁵⁾ N. R. p. 69.

⁶⁾ Ib. p. 30.

⁷⁾ Ib. p. 55.

⁸⁾ Ib. pp. 30, 35.

gard to their tendencies and results. Some actions tend to promote the good of mankind; some "in their own nature", tend to make men miserable, while others apparently tend in neither direction.¹⁾ There are thus essential and absolute differences between actions, just as much as between black and white, and the fact that in complex cases it is often difficult to distinguish their good or evil tendencies, does not disprove this statement,²⁾ nor is it in the power of man to change or alter these differences of actions. Men also differ in character and inward or outward circumstances, according as they are good or bad, happy or miserable, rich or poor.³⁾

That things in this sense differ from one another cannot be disputed, but it would have been well if Clarke had more carefully explained the analogy he says exists between things mathematical and things moral.⁴⁾ He does not say the things themselves are "eternal and necessary", but only the relations between things.⁵⁾ It is not necessary that straight lines should exist, but, given two straight lines, they never can enclose a space. Applying this analogy to things moral, Clarke says,— "Some things are in their own nature good; such as keeping faith, and performing equitable compacts.⁶⁾ Other things are in their own nature absolutely evil, such as breaking faith, refusing to perform equitable compacts, cruelly destroying those who have not given any occasion for such treatment".⁶⁾ Yet Clarke also says actions are good or evil according as they tend to the benefit or disadvantage of all men. Thus when Clarke says breaking faith is always evil, he at the same time

¹⁾ R. R. pp. 32—35.

²⁾ Ib. pp. 37, 73, 104. Clarke says the colors in a painting often so run into one another as to be indistinguishable to the eye, and yet the colors are in reality quite different from one another.

³⁾ N. R. p. 29, 31. B. & Att. p. 108.

⁴⁾ "As the addition of certain numbers necessarily produces a certain sum, so in moral matters there are certain necessary and unalterable respects and relations of things, of eternal necessity in their own nature". N. R. p. 68, quoted from Cumberland.

⁵⁾ N. R. pp. 28, 29, 49.

⁶⁾ Ib. p. 35.

asserts an invariability of relation between the action and the result. Now that breaking faith, and even destroying the innocent always tends to the disadvantage of all men, may be and has been denied. What reason have we then, for believing the relations of certain actions to certain ends, to be invariable and constant? Only the assertion of Clarke, for he adduces no proof in support of his statement.¹⁾ In the case of the two lines it is different, for from the very definition of a *line* it follows that two straight lines cannot enclose a space. So also the Law of Newton had been deduced from known properties of matter, and experimentally proved to be without exception. To say that good actions always tend to the benefit of all men is merely to say that good actions are good. In other words, it requires to be proved that the relations in which actions stand to one another and to the good of all are constant and invariable, and this proof Clarke has not given. The same is true of the relations in which different persons stand to one another. The assertion of the invariability of these relations is either an empty tautology, or a proposition demanding proof.²⁾ But although Clarke has only asserted and not proved the analogy between mathematical and moral relations of things, no one will dispute his main assertion, that there are differences of things moral, and different relations of things towards one another. This forms the first link in Clarke's chain of reasoning, for upon the "differences of things", depends the "fitness of things".

III. *The Fitness of Things.*

"That from these different relations of different things there necessarily arises an agreement or disagreement of some things with others, or a fitness or unfitness of the application

¹⁾ N. R. pp. 44—50.

²⁾ Thus,—God is greater than man; therefore man stands in a relation of inferiority to God. This is mere tautology. If, however, Clarke asserts the relation in which man stands to God is always the same, he takes it for granted that man is as unchangeable as God, without proving this to be true.

of different things or different relations, is likewise as plain as that there is any such thing as proportion in Geometry and Arithmetic, or uniformity or difformity in comparing together the respective figures of bodies".¹⁾ In these words Clarke states his principle of the fitness of things. Thus he believes nature declares and manifests the law of nature. As no law or opinion of men can change the differences of things, so no human law or opinion can in the least degree alter the fitness of things. As things existed before all positive law, institution, or government, so no law or power, not even of an all-powerful Leviathan, can alter the eternal distinctions of right and wrong. So long as things exist, just so long do the fitnesses of things remain unchangeable, as the law of nature to man and the rule which God himself follows in the government of the world.²⁾ Clarke had already asserted that the different relations of things are as invariable as mathematical proportions. He now maintains the same with regard to the fitness of things. This fitness is just as certain, unalterable and evident as any mathematical relation or proportion.³⁾ That God is greater than man, follows from our knowledge of God and man,⁴⁾ and is therefore just as evident as that three is greater than two. From the one truth it follows that the sum of two and three is five, and from the other follows the fitness of man's worship of God and obedience to his commands. Both results are equally certain, and both equally evident. All that is necessary to a right decision of both problems, is to know the two factors in question, and to possess a mind free from unreasonable prejudice.

In support of this assertion Clarke adduces certain proofs. Of these the chief is the general assent of mankind to the fitness of things. The others are all varieties and instances

¹⁾ N. R. p. 29,

²⁾ Ib. p. 69.

³⁾ Ib. pp. 29, 30, 37, 40, 42, 54, 67.

⁴⁾ The existence and attributes of God, Clarke takes for granted, as having been proved in his first Boyle lecture.

of this.¹⁾ To the law of nature, says Clarke, "the reason of all men everywhere naturally and necessarily assents, as all men agree in their judgment concerning the whiteness of the snow or the brightness of the sun".²⁾ This is proved by the general agreement of writers on moral subjects, by the customs and laws of different nations, and by the common experience of individuals. The experiment of Plato proves the same thing, for by merely asking questions of an unprejudiced, inexperienced young man, "you may, without teaching him anything at all directly, cause him to express in his answers, just and adequate notions of geometrical truths and true and exact determinations concerning right and wrong".³⁾ Although Clarke rejects the doctrine of innate ideas, he considers this experiment to prove "that the differences, relations and proportions of things both natural and moral, in which all unprejudiced minds thus naturally agree, are certain, unalterable and real in the things themselves",⁴⁾ and that the mind of man "naturally and unavoidably" assents to both mathematical relations and the moral fitness of things. The same is proved by the fact that even the most wicked men respect the fitness of things, for they would rather not murder and rob if they could attain the same ends in any other way. Also, although it may be admitted that men deceive themselves with regard to the morality of their own actions, it is found that they generally judge correctly concerning the actions of other persons. This is especially seen when men are sufferers by the wrong-doing of others, for it is then that they "cry out for equity and exclaim against injustice".⁵⁾ That men acknowledge the fitness of things is likewise proved from the fact that laws exist, for if there were no fitness of things there could be no reasonable

¹⁾ Such is the common application made by the ethical writers of the day to the standard of Vincentius,—"*Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*".

²⁾ N. R. p. 66.

³⁾ Ib. pp. 44, 45.

⁴⁾ Ib. pp. 44, 45.

⁵⁾ Ib. p. 49.

foundation for any law.¹⁾ "This plainly evinces that the mind of man unavoidably acknowledges a natural and necessary difference between good and evil, antecedent to all positive constitution whatever".²⁾ The assertion that some whole nations are totally ignorant of the fitness of things, no more disproves this statement than the fact that these same nations are entirely ignorant of mathematical demonstrations.³⁾ The reason why many men do not perceive the fitness of things is that they are blinded by prejudice and the results of a bad education. Although we may often find it difficult in complex cases to determine the boundaries between right and wrong, fit and unfit, we know they are as essentially different as white and black, light and darkness.⁴⁾ Fitness "is founded in the nature of things and the qualifications of persons".⁵⁾ That is to say, persons differ from one another in their various qualifications of character, and in their relations to one another, and there are differences of circumstances and of actions.

From these differences arise fitnesses of "application"⁵⁾ of certain circumstances to certain persons and a fitness of certain actions or "manners of behavior", on the part of some persons towards others. It is true that God is infinitely superior to man; it is fit that man should worship, obey and imitate God, and it is fit that God "should do always what tends most to the universal good of the whole creation".⁶⁾ It is true that some men are innocent; it is fit that the innocent should be happy.⁷⁾ From the nature of men in their relations to one another it is evidently fit that they should all endeavour to promote the good of all. Men are in the main on a footing of equality with one another; it is therefore fit that they should observe the "rule of equity" in all their

¹⁾ N. R. p. 46.

²⁾ Ib. p. 50.

³⁾ Ib. p. 36.

⁴⁾ Ib. p. 36.

⁵⁾ Ib. p. 29.

⁶⁾ Ib. p. 30.

⁷⁾ Ib. p. 31.

dealings. The preservation of peace and compacts is necessary to the welfare of all; therefore it is fit that men should keep peace and compacts unbroken.

From these illustrations we see that Clarke, without directly stating the fact, speaks of two kinds of "fitness", the one a direct and immediate fitness, arising from the differences of persons, the other an indirect fitness of certain actions to certain ends. The greatness of God and the worship of men are two things or ideas whose union we pronounce fit, and whose disunion we know is unfit. This is an end fit in itself. On the other hand, if, in order to the worship of God, we build a church; this action is fit, because tending to the end of worship. The action of building a church were otherwise without moral quality, but it becomes fit when it is necessary to the attainment of an end fit in itself. So it is with compacts, the necessary means to promote the welfare of mankind, and therefore fit.¹⁾ Clarke does not sufficiently distinguish between the two kinds of fitness. At times it would seem as if there were but one great end, fit in itself, and all other actions fit only with reference to that end. This end is the "universal benefit and welfare of all men". In fact, he distinctly states, "those things only are truly good in their own nature which either tend to the universal benefit and welfare of all men or at least are not destructive of it".²⁾ He even seems to think the actions of God are fit for the same reason, for he cannot conceive God to have had any other motive in the creation of the world than "to communicate to his creatures his goodness and happiness".³⁾ Thus one would think Clarke had reduced all morality to a single principle, by adopting the utilitarian standard and regarding all actions as fit with reference to that standard. But Clarke's theory of the differences of things as well as the illustrations he gives of the fitness of certain actions, forbid us to accept this

¹⁾ N. R. pp. 35, 59, 60.

²⁾ Ib. pp. 55, 57, 59, 60.

³⁾ Ib. p. 96.

view. We can only say Clarke accepted partially the utilitarian standard, by making the “welfare of all men”, an end fit in itself, and actions fit or unfit with reference to it; but he also attempted to show the direct fitness of particular actions, without reference to any end. Worship of God is fit, not because it tends to the welfare of men, but because God is infinitely superior to men.¹⁾ So also, it is fit that a good man should be rewarded,²⁾ because of an inherent “congruity” between goodness and happiness, and not only because such an action tends to the good of all. Clarke does not seem to have even thought of the possibility of a conflict arising between the two kinds of fitness. The same eternal reason of things which is the basis of fitness in the one case, is also the foundation of it in the other. Thus, although Clarke does not draw the conclusion, every action at least that concerns the relations of men to one another has a two-fold fitness or unfitness. It is fit that men should practise the rule of equity, because such action tends to the welfare of all men, but it is also fit because of the fact that men are essentially equal. If we follow the former standard we arrive at the question,—why is the welfare of all men fit? Clarke’s only answer is to refer us to a vague difference he says exists in things, and to say there is a fitness or congruity between the ideas or things *man* and *happiness*, and thus much more in the case of *all men*. If we consider the immediate fitness of an equitable action we find a similar fitness or congruity between the *equality* of men and *equity* of action, rendering it fit that these two things or ideas should exist together.

This is Clarke’s peculiar doctrine of the fitness of things; not, in the last analysis, a fitness of adaptation to an end, but a fitness inherent in things. It is a quality or property of things. That it is intuitively recognised by the mind we learn from the statement of Clarke that *it is evident*. The analogy he endeavours to show between moral fitness and the

¹⁾ N. R. p. 51.

²⁾ Ib. p. 120.

proportions and *agreements* of things mathematical, leads us to think of the words *symmetry*, *harmony*, *beauty*, and suggests that Clarke had in mind aesthetic qualities of things to which the mind necessarily gives its approval. Clarke's own language lends credit to this supposition, and a few quotations will best show the application he makes of this principle. "The proportions and fitnesses of things, which have so much *excellency* and *beauty* in them — — —".¹⁾ "Virtue and true goodness are things so truly *noble* and *excellent*, so *lovely* and *venerable* in themselves, and do so necessarily approve themselves to the reason and conscience of men — — — there being in virtue an *unaccountable* and as it were *divine force*, which almost always compels men to praise just and equitable and honest men. On the contrary, vice and injustice, profaneness and debauchery, are things so absolutely *odious* in their own nature — — —".²⁾ "There is no *congruity* or *proportion* in the uniform disposition and correspondent order of any bodies or magnitudes, no *fitness* or *agreement* in the *application* of similar geometrical figures one to another, — — — so visible and conspicuous as the *beauty* and *harmony* of the exercise of God's several attributes, meeting with suitable returns of duty and honour from all his rational creatures throughout the universe. — — — The *suitableness* and *proportion*, the *correspondency* and *connection* of each of these things respectively, is as plain and conspicuous as the shining of the noonday sun".³⁾ "There is no man, who has any just *sense* of the difference between good and evil, but must needs acknowledge that virtue and goodness are truly *amiable*, — — — and that, on the contrary, cruelty, violence and oppression, fraud, injustice, are of themselves *hateful* and *odious*".⁴⁾

Clarke nowhere gives a definition of the words *fit* and *fitness*. Had he done so it would have greatly aided in the understanding of this, the most obscure part of his ethical

¹⁾ N. R. p. 39.

²⁾ Ib. pp. 47, 48.

³⁾ Ib. pp. 51, 52.

⁴⁾ Ib. pp. 55, 56, 71, 72.

philosophy. In view of his general use of the word, and with especial reference to the passages just quoted, we venture to define Clarke's *fitness* as a quality of things (persons and actions) in their relations to one another, which when perceived or thought of as a possibility, necessarily commands our approval, and the absence of which necessarily occasions our disapproval. It is thus analogous with the beauty and harmony of things natural; it is evident, yet unexplainable; it is a fact of experience, yet no further reason can be given for the influence it exerts upon our minds. It is true Clarke endeavoured to explain moral approval by saying it was perception of the fitness of things, and to explain the fitness of things by saying it lay in the differences of things; but this is an explanation that does not explain. A feeling cannot be expressed by straight lines and curves, nor can a fact of the moral consciousness be explained by talking about the abstract differences of things. One can never describe a rainbow to a blind man, and no one can explain moral approval to a man who has never experienced it. Moral approval is a fact of consciousness, yet Clarke says fitness is in the things themselves. This is transferring the word *fitness* from the domain of the moral consciousness to the realm of unconscious things. To say an action is fit in itself is to confound cause and effect, by ascribing to the action the impression it makes upon the mind. *Fit* is a word expressing moral approval, and to say an action is fit in itself, apart from the moral approval which its contemplation occasions is to make an unintelligible assertion. This assertion Clarke makes in his anxiety to overthrow the arbitrary morality of Hobbes, by showing that fitness exists *eternally and immutably* in the things themselves. The fitness is in things, the moral approval is in the percipient mind. Unable to get rid of the fact of moral approval and afraid to reduce it to mere feeling, he endeavours, as we shall see later, to bring it under the Lockean definition of knowledge, by making it a mere passive perception of the external fitness of things.

To carry out the mathematical analogy in every detail

would be to misunderstand Clarke's position. He does not assert that things moral correspond in all their relations to things natural, but he does maintain that the moral differences of things are just as invariable, and the moral fitness of things just as evident as the differences and proportions of things natural. Of the invariability of things moral we have already spoken, it now remains to consider Clarke's assertion that the fitness of things is just as evident as mathematical proportions. His proofs of this statement are very insufficient. That all men assent to the same principles of right and wrong is not even maintained by Clarke, and is certainly contradicted by History and Ethnology. To account for even the general agreement which Clarke asserts, explanations have been given which his arguments would not discredit. The experiment of Plato quoted by Clarke, lends very little support to his theory, and proves nothing to the purpose, chiefly because a young man absolutely untaught and yet able to answer Socrates' questions, could not be found. The facts that bad men would rather attain their ends without crime, that the injured at once perceive injustice, and that men make compacts and laws, may be explained from experience and the facts of human nature, without the aid of any theory of eternal and immutable morality, or any inherent fitness in the nature of things.

In short, Clarke's assertion *it is evident*, is either a fact of his own experience, or it is a mere statement or assumption, such as philosophers make who construct ethical theories. To prove a fact of individual experience valid for all mankind, it would be necessary to show that all men have the same experience. This proof Clarke has not given, and the partial proofs he has adduced are, as we have seen, very inadequate. Unless, then, we find in his treatment of moral perception some further support for the statement that moral fitness is just as evident as mathematical proportion, we must conclude it to be nothing but an assertion, lacking sufficient proof, and yet, perhaps, a supposition necessary to the construction of his ethical theory. But as hypotheses are founded upon a basis of probability and are confirmed by their appli-

cation to the facts of experience, there remains the possibility that Clarke's assertion will be justified by the logical coherence and practical value of his entire ethical theory.

IV. *Moral Perception.*

According to Clarke, there are in the universe two great entities, God and Nature, the Creator and his Creation. Nature includes not only inanimate things, but living conscious souls, the souls of men. Inanimate things, together with plants and the lower animals, are what Clarke calls *things natural* in the narrower sense. With these directly, moral philosophy has nothing to do. What is left, then, in Nature, to be the subject of ethical enquiry? Only persons, souls, thinking beings. Nature, in this widest sense, includes both God and men. It is in the nature of things, that is, in the nature of God and man, that moral distinctions are founded. The eternal fitness of things, is a fitness of relations between individual souls. The individual soul stands to the rest of nature in the relation of subject and object, the perceiving mind and the *things* perceived. The universe is reasonable, or rather it was originally so, because God is the creator. The same reason therefore which pervades the whole, exists also in each individual. The reason in man perceives the reason in nature; if a fitness exist in things, it will naturally be perceived by the individual mind. All this is very like the speculations of Cudworth, and, as with Cudworth, Clarke's conception of what he calls "the abstract and absolute reason of things", ¹⁾ is very indefinite and vague. He gives no definition of the word *reason*, except to speak of it as an "excellent faculty, whereby we are enabled to distinguish good from evil", ²⁾ a faculty possessed by God and given by him to men. But since good and evil are fitnesses and unfitnesses existing in the nature of things, and moral perception is the perceiving of these distinctions, this distinguishing of good and evil is a kind of knowledge, and reason

¹⁾ N. R. p. 42.

²⁾ Ib. p. 39.

is the faculty whereby we obtain a knowledge of moral distinctions. But since reason also deals with the knowledge of "things natural", we may safely conclude Clarke would have defined reason as the faculty whereby the mind obtains knowledge.¹⁾ His unintelligible language concerning the eternal and abstract reason of things does not perhaps agree with this definition, nor is it necessary that it should, at least for our present purpose. It is sufficient to know that in making reason the ethical faculty Clarke was endeavouring to bring moral perception under the Lockean definition of knowledge.²⁾ The mind obtains the knowledge of the fitness of things by means of reason, the ethical faculty. The soul, or mind, or thinking being, Clarke defines as "a permanent indivisible immaterial substance."³⁾ "It has *powers* of perception, thinking, memory, imagination, will; but the soul is none of these, nor are they parts of the soul". Every imagination, every volition, every thought, is the imagination, will and thought of that whole thinking substance which I call myself".⁴⁾ As mind, or thinking being, the soul's essential "power" or "quality"⁵⁾ is *thinking*. Knowledge is obtained by means of this power of thought, but knowledge presupposes ideas. "Simple ideas are the foundation of all our knowledge, and clear and distinct perception of the agreement or disagreement of those ideas, is the best and greatest criterion of truth".⁶⁾

With regard to the origin of our ideas of things moral, Clarke also takes the same ground as Locke. There are no

¹⁾ Speaking of reason, Locke says,—“The word *reason*, in the English language, has different significations: sometimes it is taken for true and clear principles; sometimes for clear and fair deductions from those principles; and sometimes for the cause, particularly the final cause. But the consideration I shall have of it here is in a signification different from all these; and that is, as it stands for a *faculty in man*”. Essay, Bk. IV. Ch. 17. § 1.

²⁾ “Knowledge is the perception of the agreement or disagreement of two ideas”. “Essay” Bk. IV. Ch. 1. § 2.

³⁾ Let. Dod. p. 197.

⁴⁾ Ib. p. 176.

⁵⁾ Ib. p. 99.

⁶⁾ Ib. p. 161.

innate ideas.¹⁾ Intuitively we are conscious of our own thought and existence.²⁾ By means of the senses, aided by reason, we become aware of the existence of other men.³⁾ By means of the demonstrative reason we arrive at the knowledge of the being and attributes of God. These are the ideas of things moral which form the foundation of Clarke's ethical theory, for in things moral lie the differences and the fitness of things. "Now what these eternal and unalterable relations, respects, or proportions of things, with their consequent *agreements* or *disagreements*, *fitnesses* or *unfitnesses*, absolutely and necessarily are in themselves, that also they appear to be, to the understanding of all intelligent beings; except those only who understand things to be what they are not, that is, whose understandings are either very imperfect or very much depraved".⁴⁾

Beyond this general statement of his position, Clarke gives very little explanation of how the mind perceives the fitness of things. As we have already seen, the word *fit* is improperly applied to things in themselves, apart from moral approval, but admitting for the sake of argument, that *fitness* may and does exist in things, it remains to enquire how the soul by means of reason perceives this fitness. In other words, how is the perception of fitness to be placed under Clarke's own definition of knowledge as the "perception of the agreement or disagreement of ideas"?

In the first place, we cannot but notice that fitness and agreement are totally different ideas, and therefore to be applied to different things. There is the same distinction between *fitness* and *agreement* as between *ought* and *is*, *right* and *true*, *desirable* and *actual*, *ideal* and *real*, and Clarke's theory, in neglecting this distinction, is guilty of a confusion of terms. To say a thing is true, implies intellectual assent; to say it is right, implies moral approval, whether the truth and rightness exist in the things themselves or not. This con-

¹⁾ N. R. p. 45. Comp. Locke's "Essay" Book I.

²⁾ Let. Dod. pp. 93, 121.

³⁾ Ib. pp. 175, 176. Comp. Locke on "Sensitive Knowledge", "Essay" Bk. IV. Ch. 2. § 14.

⁴⁾ N. R. p. 38.

fusion of thought almost leads Clarke to the position afterwards held by his disciple Wollaston, that all sin is in effect the denial of a true proposition. In fact Clarke asserts something very similar to this, when he speaks of those who refuse to live according to the laws of *justice* and *truth*, as “endeavouring to make things be what they are not and cannot be; which is the highest presumption and greatest insolence, as well as the greatest absurdity imaginable. — — — In a word; all wilful wickedness and perversion of right, is the very same insolence and absurdity in moral matters as it would be in natural things, for a man to pretend to alter the certain proportions of numbers, to take away the demonstrable relations and properties of mathematical figures, to make light darkness, and darkness light, or to call sweet bitter, and bitter sweet”.¹⁾ This strange language approaches very nearly to the assertion that whatever is, is right. Yet Clarke would by no means say this. Originally, he believes, it was thus, but since the fall of Adam corruption and sin have entered into the world, and things are no longer what they ought to be. Thus Clarke refuses to draw the logical conclusions from the premises he lays down, and in so far is inconsistent with himself. It is moreover a dangerous admission, to say “the natural order of things is manifestly perverted”.²⁾ If nature be perverted, how can it so clearly reveal the law it contains, and if nature be perverted, is not the law of nature perverted also? What is the use of founding morality on the nature and differences of things, if things are not what they once were, or what they ought to be. Clarke has no answer to this objection, except to say that reason reveals the true and original law of nature. But this is not that reason which perceives truth alone, the faculty which concerns itself with things as they are. It is reason in the vague sense already mentioned as borrowed by Clarke from Cudworth, but not at all the Lockean conception of reason, which was really accepted by Clarke. This

¹⁾ N. R. pp. 41, 42.

²⁾ Compare N. R. pp. 105, 106, 125, 153.

double use of the term reason does not tend to the clearness of Clarke's exposition, nor add to the logical consistency of his system.

But not only are the ideas *fitness* and *agreement* not identical; there is no apparent logical connection between them. Between the ideas *is* and *ought* there is a great gulf fixed. If we say God is great, therefore he ought to be worshipped, we have attempted to form a syllogism without the major premise; and if we supply this premise,—all great beings ought to be worshipped—we are only begging the question. Yet Clarke commits this fallacy. "That God is infinitely superior to men, is as clear as that infinity is larger than a point, or eternity longer than a moment. And 'tis as certainly *fit*, that men should honour and worship, obey and imitate God, as 'tis certainly *true* that they have an entire dependence on him". This is the reasoning made use of by Clarke whenever he attempts to show how fitness is perceived by the mind,—it is *true*, therefore it is *fit*. It is true that men are equal; it is fit that men should observe the laws of equity. It is true that I wish other men to honour me; it is fit that I should do unto them likewise. It is true that God always desires the happiness of all men; it is fit that every man should do the same. In all these instances the term *fit* is substituted for the term *true*, as if the two were identical. In order to justify this procedure some connection must be established between the terms *true* and *fit*, and this connection Clarke has not supplied, except by setting up a false analogy between fitness and agreement.

But even admitting, what we cannot admit, that fitness is agreement, we fail to see how any such agreement can be asserted of things moral. If knowledge be the perception of the agreement or disagreement of ideas, then knowledge of fitness must be perception of the agreement or disagreement of our ideas of God and men in their various relations to one another. If it is fit that men should worship God, because God is infinitely great, then there must be an agreement between our ideas of *greatness* and *worship*. Is there any such agreement? Does the idea of worship at all resemble the idea

of greatness? They are entirely different,—they belong in fact to different classes of ideas,—worship is an action, greatness is a quality of persons. Nor is there any disagreement between them. They are not ideas that can be compared, because they belong to entirely different categories. As well might we try to compare a colour with a tone, or action with a feeling. A feeling may perhaps produce an action, and so also the greatness of God may induce men to worship him, but that fact does not proceed from agreement or disagreement of the different things. So also with the other illustrations Clarke gives of fitness; no agreement exists between the ideas to which he refers. There is neither agreement nor disagreement between equality and equity, sin and punishment, right action and happiness. Thus Hume says,—“’tis evident our passions, volitions, and actions, are not susceptible of any such agreement or disagreement; being original facts and realities, complete in themselves, and implying no reference to other passions, volitions and actions. ’Tis impossible, therefore, they can be pronounced either true or false, and be either contrary or conformable to reason”.¹⁾

Even if we finally admit that agreements can exist between things moral, all that we obtain is a true proposition, the result obtained by Wollaston, a result at variance equally with philosophy and common sense. Mere truth has in itself no moral quality. A statement is either true or false, but not right or wrong. Moral approbation is not mere intellectual assent to a true proposition. Returning therefore to our definition of *fitness*, we conclude that whatever it be in the things themselves that commands approval, it is not fitness; and that reason, in the Lockean sense, is not the moral faculty.

These conclusions are directly contrary to the opinion of Clarke, and yet there is another theory which other utter-

¹⁾ Hume devotes an entire section to prove that “moral distinctions are not derived from reason”, and his polemic is plainly directed against Clarke and Wollaston, “those who affirm that virtue is nothing but a conformity to reason; that there are eternal fitnesses and unfitnesses of things &c.” Treatise of Human Nature Bk. III. Part I. § 1.

ances of his would seem to support, but which he does not distinctly state. It agrees with our definition of fitness, but not with Clarke's theory of intellectual perception, and is thus the source of much confusion and inconsistency of statement in his work. It is indicated by the use of such words as *noble, excellent, lovely, venerable, congruity, beauty, harmony, amiable*, with reference to the perception of fitness, and, on the other hand the words *odious* and *hateful*, to express the disapproval of unfitness. Such words as these cannot properly be applied to mere intellectual perception of truth. A fact is something which is; a fitness something that ought to be. The perception of this latter proceeds not from the knowledge of a fact, but from a *feeling* of approval. This feeling may have its cause in external things, but it is itself the source of our knowledge of moral distinctions, and from it are borrowed such words as fit and unfit, right and wrong, ought and ought not. From certain isolated passages it would seem as if Clarke actually accepted this point of view. He speaks of the "*sense and conscience of a man's own mind*",¹⁾ and of "*men's natural sense of eternal moral obligations*".²⁾ He also recognises the difference between perception of truth and perception of fitness, as if he did in reality acknowledge the part that feeling plays in moral judgments.³⁾ It would seem as if he thought the mind had two faculties,—the power of perceiving truth and the power of perceiving fitness. But although Clarke's language shows that moral perception is accompanied by a feeling or emotion of like or dislike, pleasurable or painful, he does not definitely recognise the fact. Feeling thus finds no place in Clarke's theory, and it remained for Shaftesbury and later philosophers as Hutcheson, Hume and Smith, to develop the germs of the emotional theory which we find in Clarke.

With Clarke, moral perception is "knowledge of the natural and necessary relations, fitnesses, and proportions of

¹⁾ N. R. p. 43.

²⁾ Ib. p. 46.

³⁾ Ib. pp. 39, 42, 44, 45, 48, 49.

things".¹⁾ It is the mind or soul that perceives moral distinctions, and reason is the faculty whereby moral knowledge is obtained. The unprejudiced mind "cannot avoid giving its assent" to the reasonableness of the law of nature.²⁾ "The mind of man unavoidably acknowledges a natural and necessary difference between good and evil."³⁾ This is evidently nothing but a cold intellectual assent, however little it is consistent with the moral approval elsewhere referred to. Clarke also calls this moral judgment, *Conscience*, — "the judgment of a man's own mind concerning the reasonableness and fitness of the thing".⁴⁾ It is only the *unprejudiced* reason that thus assents to the fitness of things, and Clarke admits that some men are prejudiced, that their minds are corrupted, and that, in consequence, they mistake the plain distinctions between right and wrong. But such men are few, and such mental perversion is to be compared to bodily deformity. Their moral judgments, therefore, cannot be correct. "This no more disproves the natural assent of all men's unprejudiced *reason* to the rule of right and equity, than the difference of most men's countenances in general, or the deformity of some few monsters in particular, proves that there is no general likeness or uniformity in the bodies of men".⁵⁾ There are even to be found men who do not perceive the truth of mathematical demonstration. These facts prove not that the minds of all these men are incapable of perceiving moral truth, but that they need instruction.⁶⁾ Men must be taught the properties and relations of mathematical figures, and then they will of necessity perceive the force of mathematical demonstrations. Similarly they must be instructed in the eternal differences of things moral, and then they will of necessity assent to the eternal fitness of things.

¹⁾ N. R. p. 38.

²⁾ Ib. pp. 42, 50.

³⁾ Ib. pp. 44, 46, 47.

⁴⁾ Ib. p. 43.

⁵⁾ Ib. p. 66.

⁶⁾ Ib. p. 50.

V. *Moral Obligation.*

A. *Obligation in general.*

The mind, as we have seen, perceives and approves of the reasonableness and fitness of actions, "the abstract and absolute reason and nature of things".¹⁾ This approval is equivalent to saying all actions ought to be in accordance with this fitness. *It is fit*, and *it ought to be*, are equivalent propositions. But action implies an agent. Over against the fitness of things we have the moral agent. The free moral agent is the essential condition of moral action, and thus of the moral difference of things. "A moral difference of things there cannot be where there is no place for action".²⁾ When I approve of the fitness of an action, and think of myself as the moral agent, I at the same time approve of the fitness of *my* doing the action. It is fit that I should do the action; I ought to do it; I am under obligation to do it; are equivalent statements. Considering the fitness of actions in the abstract, and myself as a moral agent, able to conform my actions to the standard of fitness, I thereby declare my approval of my own actual or contemplated action, and lay an obligation upon myself so to act. "For the judgment and conscience of a man's own mind concerning the reasonableness and fitness of the thing, and that his actions should be conformed to such a rule or law, is the truest and formallest obligation. For whosoever acts contrary to this *sense* and *conscience* of his own mind, is necessarily self-condemned; and the greatest and strongest of all obligations is that which a man cannot break through without condemning himself".³⁾

The words *fitness* and *obligation* are not synonymous. *Fitness* is rather applied to actions in themselves; *obligation* to the moral agent considered as the cause of his actions. Conscience is the mind of man approving or disapproving of his actions. Conscience is moral judgment of one's own actions.

¹⁾ N. R. p. 42.

²⁾ "Remarks" p. 45.

³⁾ N. R. p. 43.

“So far as men are conscious of what is right and wrong, so far are they under an obligation to act accordingly”.¹⁾ This is equivalent to saying every man ought to follow the dictates of his own conscience. Only so far as men know right and wrong can they judge of the moral quality of their own actions, and only so far as they judge their own actions aright are they under obligation to conform their actions to that judgment. Allowing therefore, that the American Indian judges it right to scalp his enemy, Clarke must admit he ought to do so. But scalping is evidently cruel and contradictory to the fitness of things. There is therefore a contradiction possible between the dictates of conscience and the fitness of things. In so far as Clarke admits that some men are ignorant of the true moral fitness, in so far has he no explanation for this contradiction, other than to refer to the general corruption of mankind produced by the fall of Adam. But Clarke would probably not admit that the savage really thought it right to act so cruelly. He believes that men—with very few exceptions—have sufficiently clear and distinct ideas of the moral difference of things and that they generally judge correctly in these “flagrant cases”, and that, if they act cruelly they do so in disregard of the dictates of conscience.²⁾ Man, Clarke declares, is “a law unto himself”³⁾ by virtue of the moral judgment or conscience of his mind. Yet obligation is not necessity. The man may acknowledge obligation, and yet refuse to act accordingly. He is free to obey or disobey the law of his mind.⁴⁾ But whether he obeys or not, if he only continue to perceive the moral differences of things, his mind will continually assent to the “law of nature”, and his conscience approve or condemn his actions. Obligation is as unchangeable and eternal as the nature of things. It is antecedent to all positive law, and, in a sense, “antecedent to the consider-

¹⁾ N. R. p. 43.

²⁾ Ib. pp. 37, 45, 50.

³⁾ Let. Dodw. p. 16.

⁴⁾ Comp. Romans VII, 19.

ation of its being the will and command of God himself",¹⁾ and "antecedent to all consideration of any particular reward or punishment, which is only an additional weight to enforce the practise of what men were before obliged to by right reason".²⁾ These latter "considerations", Clarke says are "only secondary and additional obligations or enforcements of the first".³⁾ Thus Clarke admits the existence of secondary obligations, but in calling them *enforcements* really denies that they are obligations at all in the stricter sense of the word. He does not distinguish sufficiently between the terms he uses, and a certain confusion of ideas is the result. The obligation proceeding from the will and command of God, apart from his power to punish, is really only a variety of the original obligation from the fitness of things. God always wills and commands what is fittest and best; but we are under obligation to act according to this same fitness; therefore we are under obligation to obey God.⁴⁾ Rewards and punishments whether proceeding from the power of God or of the state, are not obligations, but "sanctions and inforcements". They supply motives or impulses to action, they support and enforce obligation. "Thus it appears in general, that the mind of man cannot avoid giving its assent to the eternal law of righteousness; and also that this assent is a formal obligation upon every man, actually and constantly to conform himself to that rule".⁵⁾

B. Duties.

The general *law* or *rule of righteousness* is what Clarke also calls the *law of nature*, the *eternal fitness of things*. In order to render it more definite he now proceeds to state the various duties it inculcates. He says,—“I might now from hence deduce in particular all the sexeral duties of morality or

¹⁾ N. R. p. 68.

²⁾ Ib. p. 71.

³⁾ Ib. p. 43.

⁴⁾ Ib. pp. 70, 71.

⁵⁾ Ib. pp. 50, 51.

natural religion, but I shall only mention the three great and principle branches, from which all the other and smaller instances of duty do naturally flow, or may without difficulty be derived".¹⁾ Thus Clarke takes the same standpoint with Locke in regard to the possibility of a demonstrative science of ethics. Locke says,—“The idea of a supreme being, infinite in power, goodness and wisdom — — and the idea of ourselves, rational beings, would, I suppose, if duly considered and pursued, afford such foundations of our duty and rules of action as might place morality among the sciences capable of demonstration”.²⁾ Clarke however almost ignores the difficulties Locke sees in the way of such demonstration, the “complexedness” of moral ideas and the “want of sensible demonstration”.³⁾

With Clarke, as with Locke, there are three “great and principal branches” of duty,—“*piety*, or men’s duty towards God”;⁴⁾ “*righteousness*, or the duty of men one toward another”;⁵⁾ and *sobriety*, or men’s duty towards themselves.⁶⁾ Our duty towards God, is that we honour, worship and adore him as “the author, preserver and governor of all things; that we employ our whole beings in his service, in encouraging the practise of universal righteousness, and promoting the designs of his divine goodness among men; and that, to enable us to do this continually we pray unto him constantly”.⁴⁾ Our knowledge of our duty to God follows inevitably from our knowledge of his character. “The consideration of his eternity and infinity, his knowledge and wisdom necessarily commands our highest admiration. The sense of his omnipresence forces a perpetual awful regard towards him — — His power and justice demand our fear— — His goodness necessarily excites our love”.⁷⁾ Thus the knowledge

¹⁾ N. R. p. 51.

²⁾ “Essay” Bk. IV. Ch. III. § 18.

³⁾ Ib. § 19.

⁴⁾ N. R. p. 51.

⁵⁾ Ib. p. 53.

⁶⁾ Ib. p. 60.

⁷⁾ Ib. p. 52.

of every several attribute of God is necessarily accompanied by a corresponding recognition of duty in the mind of man.

Righteousness, or men's duty towards their fellow-men, Clarke divides into two branches,—*Equity* or *Universal Justice*, and *Love*. The rule of equity is "that we so deal with every man as in like circumstances, we could reasonably expect he should deal with us".¹⁾ The *fitness* of the rule of equity is evident from the consideration of the relations which men bear to one another. I perceive a certain fitness in the actions of other men towards myself, and this implies the acknowledgment of certain duties on my part towards others. "Whatever I judge reasonable or unreasonable for another to do to me, that, by the same judgment I declare reasonable or unreasonable, that I in the like case should do to him".²⁾ Clarke lays particular stress upon the expressions "*in like case*", "*in like circumstances*". Men differ from one another, and therefore their duties towards one another are very different. There is equity between equals and equity between unequals. The former is the simplest case, for here the duties between both parties are the same. The circumstances are alike in both cases; therefore the duties are alike. But where the circumstances are different, the duties are also different. "But still the proportion of equity may always be deduced from the same rule of doing as we would be done by, if careful regard be had at the same time to the *difference of relation*".³⁾ The respective duties of magistrate and criminal are not the same. The duty of the magistrate is to sentence the criminal, and the duty of the criminal is to obey the sentence. In this case the magistrate "is not to consider what fear or self-love would cause him in the criminal's case, to desire; but what reason and the public good would oblige him to acknowledge was *fit* and *just* for him to expect".⁴⁾ Similarly we may deduce "the duties of parents and children, of masters and servants,

¹⁾ N. R. p. 53.

²⁾ Ib. p. 54.

³⁾ Ib. p. 55.

⁴⁾ Ib. p. 55.

of citizens and foreigners".¹⁾ *Universal Justice* is the universal practise of the law of equity throughout the world, and is "the top and perfection of all virtues". The second branch of righteousness, is universal Love or Benevolence, "that is, not only doing barely what is just and right, in our dealings with every man, but also a constant endeavouring to promote in general, to the utmost of our power, the welfare and happiness of all men".²⁾ It would seem here as if Clarke admitted works of supererogation, but all he has really done is to make a distinction between justice and love, the latter demanding far more than the former. We cannot help thinking with Lorimer,³⁾ that no real distinction can be drawn between justice and love, and that Clarke commits a tautology in thus separating them. The duty of universal love is evident from the consideration of the greatest good of man. This end is fit in itself, and in perceiving this fitness we at the same time recognise our duty to further it in every way possible. Besides, we know God always does what is fittest and best, and since he always seeks the greatest good for mankind, it is evident we ought also to further the same end. The obligation to perform this duty is also evident from the fact that by seeking the good of all, we in the end best assure our own.⁴⁾ This is rather a motive to the performance of duty than a real source of obligation.

Sobriety, or men's duty towards themselves, is the duty of every man "to preserve his own being as long as he is able, and take care to keep himself at all times in such temper and disposition, both of body and mind, as may best fit and enable him to perform his duty in all other instances".⁵⁾ That every man ought to preserve his life, "is evident; because what he is not himself the author and giver of, he can

¹⁾ N. R. p. 55.

²⁾ Ib. p. 57.

³⁾ Lorimer, "Institutes of Natural Law" on the identity of justice and charity.

⁴⁾ N. R. p. 59.

⁵⁾ Ib. p. 61.

never of himself have any just power or authority to take away".¹⁾ Besides this direct perception of the fitness of self-preservation, there is another subordinate fitness of the same duty. It is fit that men should promote the good of all; and to this end it is necessary that they should preserve their own lives. To this end also, besides the immediate care for one's life, the virtues of temperance and self-restraint are necessary; "for great intemperance and ungoverned passions not only incapacitate a man to perform his duty, but also expose him to run headlong into the commission of the greatest enormities".²⁾

Thus Clarke, while making *duty towards self* the third great branch of the law of righteousness,³⁾ really makes it subordinate to the second, or duty towards others. He does not consider man as a person endowed with rights, but as one whose whole moral life consists in the performance of duties. Right is only duty considered from the side of the one to whom duty is to be performed. Clarke's object is not to formulate a theory of rights like that of Hobbes, but a theory of duties.⁴⁾ The performance of duty, with him, is true religion. "Moral virtue is the foundation and the sum, the essence and the life of all true religion".⁵⁾

Such, then, are the duties manifested and declared by the law of nature. To all who have clear and distinct ideas of the moral differences of things, these duties are as plain

¹⁾ N. R. p. 61.

²⁾ Ib. p. 64.

³⁾ It must be noticed that Clarke uses the words "*Law of Righteousness*", in two senses; the one to designate the duty of men one to another, the other to include all branches of duty, or the complete law of nature.

⁴⁾ The only discussion of rights by Clarke is to be found in his criticism of Hobbes as to the origin of rights, which he declares to lie in the nature and fitness of things, and not in the power or authority of either God or man. Clarke's conception of *right* is different from that of Hobbes. With him the *right* or the *fit* is placed in opposition to the *wrong*, or the *unfit*. N. R. pp. 76—90.

⁵⁾ N. R. p. 90.

and obvious as mathematical demonstrations, and it is therefore absurd and blameworthy to mistake them and not to conform our actions thereto, "Tis as absurd and blameworthy to mistake negligently plain right and wrong, that is, to understand the proportions of things in morality to be what they are not, or wilfully to act contrary to known justice and equity, that is, to will things to be what they are not and cannot be; as it would be absurd and ridiculous for a man in arithmetical matters, ignorantly to believe that twice two is not equal to four".¹⁾ Thus wrong action is absurd as well as blameworthy, because it implies "acting contrary to that reason and judgment which God has implanted in the nature of man".²⁾ By the word *absurd* in this sense, Clarke seems to mean *inconsistent*, and to attach to it a moral signification such as it has not when applied to mathematical demonstration. In this sense we might admit a wrong action is absurd as well as blameworthy, but must protest against the use of the word *absurd* in so equivocal a sense. The denial of a mathematical axiom is absurd, but not blameworthy; a wrong action is blameworthy, but not absurd.³⁾ Clarke seems to overlook this distinction when he says,—“the only difference is, that assent to a plain speculative truth it is not in a man’s power to withhold, but to act according to the plain right and reason of things, he may, by the natural liberty of his will, forbear”.⁴⁾

VI. *Human Liberty.*

The soul of man Clarke defines as “a permanent, indivisible, immaterial substance”.⁵⁾ This “thinking substance”⁶⁾ has certain *powers*. Among these are imagination, memory, perception, thought and will. “This one thinking substance has not some powers in some parts, and other powers in other

¹⁾ N. R. p. 40.

²⁾ Ib. p. 41.

³⁾ Comp. Jodl, *Gesch. d. Ethik.* Bd. 1. p. 161.

⁴⁾ N. R. p. 40.

⁵⁾ Let. Dodw. p. 197.

⁶⁾ Ib. p. 176.

parts; but all its powers are powers of the whole, and all its actions are actions of the whole".¹⁾ *Will* is the power of the soul to act.²⁾ *Volition* or *willing* is the actual exercise of this power. As with Locke, so with Clarke, the question of liberty is not, is the will free, but is the man free?³⁾ The will, as a power of the soul, is subordinate to the soul itself, and the question does not concern the freedom of the will but the freedom of the man. The ambiguous use of the word *will*, Clarke thinks has been the cause of the difference of opinion between philosophers. "All error in this matter, has, I think, arisen from men's using the word *will* in a confused sense, to express partly what is passive, and partly what is active".⁴⁾ "Sometimes it signifies the last perception or approbation of the understanding, and sometimes the first exertion of the self-moving or active faculty"⁵⁾ Neither of these is *will* in the proper sense of the word. The former is the passive judgment or approval of the understanding, "and has nothing to do with the question about liberty"; the latter is not *will* but *volition*, or "doing as we will".⁶⁾ For this reason Clarke in general avoids the terms *will* and *volition*, and confines his attention to the soul, or the man himself. "The true and only question in Philosophy concerning liberty, is whether the immediate physical cause or principle of action be indeed in him whom we call the *agent*, or whether it be some other *reason sufficient*,⁷⁾ which is the real cause of the action, by operating upon the agent, and making him to be not indeed an *agent*, but a mere *patient*".⁸⁾ "Man either has within himself a principle of action, that is, a self-moving faculty, or he has not".⁸⁾ If he has such a principle he is free; if other-

¹⁾ Let. Dodw. p. 176.

²⁾ Rem. p. 22, 42.

³⁾ Locke's "Essay" Bk. II. Ch. 21. §§ 5, 21.

⁴⁾ "Letters" pp. 406, 409.

⁵⁾ "Remarks" pp. 7, 22, 26.

⁶⁾ In reference to Leibniz' principle of sufficient reason.

⁷⁾ Leibn. and Cl. p. 289.

⁸⁾ "Remarks" p. 42.

wise, he is not free but necessitated by causes without himself. A free being is "one that is endued with a power of acting, as well as of being acted upon".¹⁾ Liberty is "the power of self-motion or action".²⁾ The soul of man is such a free being. Every man "has entirely within himself a free principle or power of determining his own action upon moral motives".³⁾ "'Tis the man that freely determines himself to act".⁴⁾ The soul has both passive and active powers.⁵⁾ In perception, feeling, judgment, the mind is passive; in volition, the mind is active. The recognition of obligation, the last judgment of the understanding, motives of all kinds, are passive states of the soul. These are truly necessary, for the cause lies not in the soul itself, but in something without the soul. The mind cannot avoid giving its assent to reasonable demonstrations, and "the last judgment of the understanding is always necessary".⁶⁾ All motives, whether reasons or passions, are passive states of the soul. "The motive, or thing considered as in view, is something extrinsic to the mind. The impression made upon the mind by that motive is the *perceptive quality* "in which the mind is passive".⁷⁾ The passive states of the soul are necessary, for they belong to the great system of natural causes and effects which follow necessarily from the nature of things and the laws of the universe.

If then the soul passive with its reasons, motives, judgments, be part of the necessary order of things, does not the soul active belong to the same chain of cause and effect? Clarke emphatically says, no! Between the soul passive and the soul active there is no connection.⁸⁾ No matter what the reasons,

¹⁾ "Remarks" p. 15.

²⁾ Leibn. and Cl. p. 283.

³⁾ N. R. p. 121.

⁴⁾ "Remarks" p. 11.

⁵⁾ "Letters" pp. 416, 419, 413. "Remarks" p. 21.

⁶⁾ "Letters" pp. 405, 406, 407, 413. "Leibniz and Clarke" p. 289.

"Remarks" pp. 7, 9.

⁷⁾ "Leibniz and Clarke" p. 283. "Remarks" pp. 10, 11.

⁸⁾ "Letters" pp. 405, 409.

feelings and motives of all kinds may be, the soul has within itself the power of action, of self-motion. "Nothing can possibly be the cause of an effect more considerable than itself. Nothing that is passive can possibly be the cause of anything that is active. Understanding, or judgment, or assent, or approbation, can no more possibly be the efficient cause of action than rest can be the cause of motion".¹⁾ The reason or motive is not the cause of action, even though it may be supposed always to precede the action. An *occasion*²⁾ it may be, upon which the soul substance acts, but it is not the *cause*. "'Tis the self-moving principle, and not at all the reason or motive, which is the physical or efficient cause of action".³⁾ "Judging is one thing, and acting is another, and they have no more connection than activeness and passiveness".⁴⁾ "The physical power of acting, which is the essence of liberty, continues exactly the same after the last judgment of the understanding as before it".⁵⁾ This power of acting, power of beginning motion, power of self-determination, power of self-motion, is the liberty which Clarke asserts to belong to the soul. With the creation of the soul, liberty was conferred upon it by the creator. No matter how strong the motives, this power still remains. A man may act from strong or from weak motives, or from no motives at all,⁶⁾ or he may act contrary to the very strongest motives.⁷⁾ The very word *agent* implies freedom. "Whatever *acts* necessarily, does not indeed *act* at all, but is only *acted upon*, is not at all an *agent*, but a mere patient".⁸⁾ Souls are the only beings that act, and are therefore the only beings that are free. The soul passive is necessitated; the soul active is free. According to Locke,

¹⁾ "Remarks" p. 9.

²⁾ Ib. pp. 10, 11.

³⁾ "Letters" pp. 405, 409.

⁴⁾ "Remarks" pp. 10, 11.

⁵⁾ Ib. p. 406.

⁶⁾ Leibn. & Cl. p. 121.

⁷⁾ "Letters" p. 413.

⁸⁾ "Remarks" pp. 5, 11.

the man always acts according to the last judgment of the understanding. This Clarke does not admit. Judging, he says, is one thing; acting, another, and there is no connection between them.¹⁾

In support of his doctrine of freedom, Clarke adduces a number of proofs. Of these the strongest is the argument from consciousness. "All our actions do now in experience seem to us to be free, exactly in the same manner as they would do upon supposition of our being really free agents".²⁾ This, he says, is "not a strict demonstration, but it leaves only the bare possibility of our being so framed by the Author of nature, as to be unavoidably deceived in this manner by every experience of every action we perform".³⁾ From what we know of the character of God, we cannot believe that he would so create man; therefore we must suppose that men are free, even as they think themselves to be.³⁾ Supporting this argument, there are other considerations which also tend to prove that our consciousness does not deceive us. The very language we use in daily life, the words *agent*, and *action* prove that man is free, else they are misnomers, and we ought only to speak of being acted upon, and not acting, of patient and not agent. Again, those who assert that it is impossible for men to be agents, are only thrown back upon the supposition of a cause of action external to man, until they at last arrive at a first cause, to whom they must ascribe "liberty of action", unless they suppose an "eternal chain of effects without any cause at all, which is an express contradiction, except motion could be necessarily existent in its own nature".⁴⁾ If, however, they shrink from this absurd conclusion—Clarke thinks he has proved it absurd⁵⁾— they must admit the first

¹⁾ Leibn. & Cl. p. 405.

²⁾ "Remarks" p. 20.

³⁾ This argument Clarke says is the same as that which proves the existence of a material world. Compare Descartes,—*"Discours de la methode"* Ch. 4, 5, *"Meditationes"* Ch. 4, and *"Principia philos."* Ch. 1.

⁴⁾ "Remarks" pp. 10, 11.

⁵⁾ B. & Att. pp. 58—67.

cause to be a free agent. Having once admitted the possibility of a free agent, they have no reason to deny the possibility of man's being such a free agent, but have every reason to accept the dictum of consciousness in this regard.¹⁾ Again, our most fundamental notions of morality imply the liberty of the moral agent. "For everything that is of a moral nature implies in the very notion or essence of it, the doing of some thing which at the same time was in the agents power not to have done".²⁾ If there be no freedom there is no such thing as morality, good or bad, right or wrong, but only an irresponsible succession of natural phenomena, destitute of all moral quality whatever. The fact that we punish men, and consider them worthy of praise and blame, implies that we recognise them as the causes of their own actions. Also all our religion is founded upon the liberty of moral agents, for "moral virtue is the foundation and the sum, the essence and the life of all true religion".³⁾

Thus we see the important place assigned to liberty in Clarke's ethical system. On it depends the entire structure of his ethical religion. "Religion there can be none without a moral difference of things; a moral difference of things there cannot be where there is no place for action; and action there can be none without liberty".⁴⁾

Clarke's doctrine of liberty received criticism from various quarters. Leibniz protests against Clarke's theory of absolute liberty, and propounds his "principle of sufficient reason", "that nothing happens without a sufficient reason why it should be so rather than otherwise".⁵⁾ "A mere will without a motive is a fiction".⁶⁾ The mind of man is to be compared to a

¹⁾ "Remarks" p. 43, "And then man possibly may have liberty; and if he may possibly have it, then experience will prove that he possibly, nay, that he certainly has it".

²⁾ Leibn. & Cl. p. 414.

³⁾ N. R. p. 90.

⁴⁾ "Remarks" p. 45.

⁵⁾ Leibn. & Cl. pp. 21, 55.

⁶⁾ Ib. p. 93.

balance; the passions and reasons to the weights. "When two passions contend against each other the strongest always remains master of the field, unless the other be assisted either by reason, or by some other passion conspiring with it".¹⁾ Clarke in reply, said this was making the mind a mere *patient* and no *agent* at all. It is true, he said, that nothing happens without a sufficient reason, "but in things in their own nature indifferent, mere *will* is alone that sufficient reason".²⁾ "The motive, or thing considered as in view, is something extrinsic to the mind",³⁾ and with regard to the impression made upon the mind by the motive, the mind is passive. Leibniz protests against this literal interpretation of his illustration. Properly speaking, he says, motives are not like weights in a balance, for they are not without the mind, but within it. We cannot divide the mind from the motives, for "the motives comprehend all the dispositions which the mind can have to act voluntarily; for they include not only the reasons, but also the inclinations arising from the passions or other preceding impressions. Wherefore if the mind should prefer a weak inclination to a strong one, it would act against itself, and otherwise than it is disposed to act".⁴⁾ If this be not true, then choice is a blind chance.⁵⁾ Leibniz thus takes a position somewhat similar to that of Locke, and Clarke's reply that such a standpoint is sheer fatalism does not invalidate his arguments. It is "moral necessity", Leibniz says, but both he and Clarke declare moral necessity is, properly speaking, no necessity at all.⁶⁾ Leibniz calls it self-determination according to the principle of sufficient reason.

Not less formidable than Leibniz' criticism was that of Anthony Collins, in his "Philosophical enquiry concerning human liberty", published anonymously in the year 1715.⁷⁾

¹⁾ Leibn. & Cl. p. 383.

²⁾ Ib. p. 73.

³⁾ Ib. p. 283.

⁴⁾ Ib. p. 167.

⁵⁾ Ib. p. 159.

⁶⁾ Ib. pp. 161, 163, 233.

⁷⁾ Of this book, Martineau says, "there is no abler statement of the necessitarian argument". "Types of Ethical Theory" p. 462.

Clarke replied to this book in his "Remarks upon a book entitled a philosophical enquiry concerning human liberty". Collins' six arguments¹⁾ are as follows,—(1) Experience proves "that man is ever determined in his willing", and that "the will follows the last judgment of the understanding". (2) "Man is a necessary agent, because all his actions have a beginning: for whatever has a beginning must also have a cause; and every cause is a necessary cause. Otherwise nothing can produce something". (3) Liberty would not be a perfection but an imperfection. Thus even God does not possess liberty. "If man were not a necessary agent, he could be convinced upon no principles; all reasoning would be of no use to him, — — — and all his motions would depend upon chance". (4) Liberty is inconsistent with the divine prescience. (5) "If there was not a necessary agent, determined by pleasure and pain, there would be no foundation for rewards and punishments". (6) "If man was not a necessary agent, determined by pleasure and pain, he would have no notion of morality, or motive to practise it".²⁾

Clarke answers these arguments in detail, with greater or less success:³⁾—(1) Experience and consciousness prove that men are free. Also the will does not of necessity follow the last judgment of the understanding. (2) It is true that whatever has a beginning must also have a cause, but the cause of action is the man and not the motive. Collins' use of the word *necessary-agent* is a contradiction in terms. (3) If it be a perfection not to possess liberty then a stone is a more perfect creature than a man. Moral necessity must not be confounded with physical necessity. The assertion that man must be a necessary agent since motives influence him, is "built entirely upon the supposition that there is no middle between necessity and absolute indifferency".⁴⁾ (4) Liberty

¹⁾ "Remarks" pp. 19, 29, 36.

²⁾ *Ib.* p. 40.

³⁾ As we have already mentioned most of these arguments, it must here suffice merely to state Clarke's replies as briefly as possible.

⁴⁾ "Remarks" p. 36.

is not inconsistent with the divine prescience, for the knowledge God has of the future actions of men does not render them necessary, any more than my knowledge that a covetous person will accept a bribe, renders it necessary for him so to do. (5) The fact that men are free agents, is the only true foundation of rewards and punishments. (6) This last argument Clarke declares to be the same with the fifth.¹⁾ In support of Dodwell's „Epistolary discourse”, Collins again made a strong attack on Clarke's "liberty", by attempting to prove the materiality of the soul; and that consciousness is a mode of motion, and consequently governed by invariable natural laws. It must here suffice to note that Clarke maintained on the contrary that the soul of man is "a permanent, indivisible, immaterial substance",²⁾ not subject to the laws of matter, but possessed of liberty of action. Also Clarke's argument that the materiality of the soul, involving, as it must, absolute necessity, is entirely "destructive of religion", could not be of weight as well with a Deist like Collins as a High-Church theologian like Dodwell.

Four "letters to Dr. Clarke, concerning liberty and necessity", from a gentleman of the University of Cambridge",³⁾ turn chiefly on the Lockean standpoint that the will always follows the last judgment of the understanding. With Clarke's answers to this, his opponent seems to have been fairly well satisfied.

It is not our purpose to criticise further Clarke's position with regard to human freedom, except to point out an inconsistency between his doctrine of *liberty*, and his treatment of *motives*. There is no connection, he asserts, between the passive and active states of the soul. The last judgment of the understanding, moral perception, the sense of obligation, the knowledge of rewards and punishments; in short, all motives whatever, are passive states of the soul. At the most these

¹⁾ "Remarks" p. 40.

²⁾ "Let. Dodw." p. 197.

³⁾ These letters form an appendix to Clarke's correspondence with Leibniz in the 8vo. edition of 1717, pp. 403—416.

are only *occasions* upon which the mind acts, and between them and action or self-motion there is no sort of causal connection. Why then speak of motives at all, if they are no aid to morality? Yet Clarke gives considerable attention to motives. He speaks of moral perception as being a sufficient motive to men of "right reason", while other men require the extraordinary motives of rewards and punishments, to induce them to act rightly. Thus between Clarke's moral perception and moral action, there lies a gulf similar to that between the Cartesian matter and mind. Clarke, too, endeavours to bridge the chasm by the expedient of Geulinx. The soul, it is true, acts upon moral motives, but these motives are not the causes of action, but only the "*occasions*" upon which the soul acts.¹⁾ From the consideration of the fact that God and reasonable men always act reasonably, Clarke is obliged to admit what he calls a *moral necessity*. This term *moral necessity*, he says, is only a figurative expression, "to express the certainty of such an event as may reasonably be depended on", and is, properly speaking, no necessity at all. In denying thus that motives necessarily influence the soul to act he leaves the chasm wide open. He says there is a "middle between necessity and absolute indifferency",²⁾ but gives no explanation other than the occasionalistic theory just mentioned. Thus on the one hand are motives, and judgments of the understanding; on the other, arbitrary liberty of action. The man is free, yet he acts from motives; motives affect the soul passively, yet they do not influence its action.

Yet some utterances of Clarke would seem to suggest a solution of the problem, by laying more stress on what he calls "moral necessity". He says,—“the more excellent and perfect any creatures are, the more cheerfully and steadily are their wills always determined by this supreme obligation, in conformity to nature and in imitation of the most perfect will of God”.³⁾ In other words, he would seem to suggest

¹⁾ "Remarks" pp. 10, 11.

²⁾ *Ib.* p. 36.

³⁾ N. R. p. 43.

that there is a subjective and an objective factor in the question, the nature of the man and the nature of his circumstances. The less intelligent the man, the stronger the force and influence of circumstances; the higher he stands in intelligence and moral strength, the less power have circumstances and temporary motives over his action. Freedom belongs to the man, necessity to his circumstances; freedom is self-determination, necessity is determination from without. There is a necessity from within and a necessity from without; a moral necessity and a physical necessity. But this standpoint, although frequently suggested and approached, Clarke does not take, and with him as with Descartes, there remains the unexplained duality, the unbridged chasm, between matter and mind, motives and action, necessity and liberty.

VII. *Motives.*

Clarke's treatment of *motives* or *impulses to action*, is chiefly confined to the rewards and punishments of a future life. Other motives he considers of far less importance, as inadequate for supporting the practise of virtue. Still, his fragmentary treatment of the subject would seem to show that it is chiefly through the *feelings* that man is prompted to do the right and avoid the wrong. Moral perception itself, with the *sense* of obligation it excites, is a sufficient motive to men of "right reason". The feeling of respect for the moral law, naturally inclines to obedience to its commands. The beauty and excellency of virtue excites *love* and *admiration*,¹⁾ and the practise of virtue affords "*pleasure* and *satisfaction*".²⁾ Thus "the inclinations of his uncorrupted affections",³⁾ prompt a man to obey the right. On the contrary, vice is so "odious in its own nature", that it necessarily stirs up in the soul *dislike* and *abhorrence*, and a consequent disinclination to wrong action.⁴⁾ With regard to God, our knowledge of his character

¹⁾ N. R. pp. 47, 55, 56.

²⁾ Ib. p. 58.

³⁾ Ib. p. 60.

⁴⁾ Ib. pp. 48, 49.

leads us to *adore* and *love* him, and this love inclines us to obedience to his will.¹⁾ As to our fellow men, our "*natural affections*", lead us to seek the welfare of all, as natural affection for "children and relations and friends" incline us to seek their welfare in particular. So also, our "*natural self-love*", our "*natural wants and desires*", incline us to promote the good of all, for "men stand in need of each other's assistance to make themselves easy in the world; and are fitted to live in communities; and society is absolutely necessary for them; and mutual love and benevolence is the only possible means to establish this society in any tolerable and desirable manner".²⁾ "That which tends to the benefit of the whole must of necessary consequence, *originally* and *in its own nature* tend also to the universal benefit of every individual part of the creation".³⁾ Thus has self-love regard to the rewards and punishments that are frequently annexed to the practise of virtue or vice in this present life. *Hope* of reward excites to the practise of virtue;⁴⁾ *fear* of punishment deters from vice. Even in the present life the good are in general happier than the evil. This difference lies in the very nature of things. Temperance tends to the preservation of health, and on the whole, "a due subjecting of all our appetites and passions, is evidently the directest means to obtain such settled peace and satisfaction of mind, as is the first foundation of all true happiness".⁵⁾ On the contrary, abuse of the powers and faculties of our minds, inordinate appetites, passions, intemperance, injustice, and all vices, are sufficiently plain causes of the miseries and calamities of society".⁵⁾

Thus the "affections" of love, hope and fear, form the chief motives toward right action, and if these "natural affections" were unhindered doubtless men would always act according to "right reason". There are, however, hindrances,

¹⁾ N. R. pp. 52, 90, 91.

²⁾ Ib. p. 59.

³⁾ Ib. p. 103.

⁴⁾ Ib. p. 123.

⁵⁾ Ib. p. 104.

opposing passions, “allurements to vice”, all tending in the opposite direction from the motives already mentioned. These, too, are so strong that they outweigh the influences towards good. Such are negligent misunderstanding, wilful passions and desires of sense, ignorance, superstition, prejudice, evil habits, customs and laws, bad education, narrow self-interest.¹⁾ Such things, says Clarke, “are the only cause which can make a reasonable creature act contrary to reason”.²⁾ “Were it not for these, ’tis impossible but the same eternal reason of things must much more have weight enough to determine constantly the wills and actions of all subordinate beings”.³⁾

From such motives as these proceeds the great over-weight of evil in the world. But how did such an evil state enter the world which God made good and reasonable and perfect? This brings Clarke to the great question of the origin of evil. It is evident the world is not now good and perfect as when it left the hand of its Creator. Virtue does not always bring happiness in this world, nor does vice always entail corresponding punishments. “The practise of vice is accompanied with great temptations and allurements of pleasure and profit; and the practise of virtue is often threatened with great calamities, losses, and sometimes even with death itself”.⁴⁾ Such being the case, the original condition of things must have been overturned and corrupted, or, as Clarke says, “the natural order of things is in event manifestly perverted”.⁵⁾ The present state of affairs is unexplainable under any other supposition. This “perversion” is with Clarke identical with the Biblical story of the “Fall” of Adam; whereby “sin entered into the world”. Since that time many philosophers and teachers have

¹⁾ N. R. pp. 31, 38, 39, 41, 45, 47, 48, 49, 124, 125, 126.

²⁾ Ib. p. 39. The inconsistency of this statement of Clarke’s with his assertion that there is no connection between the passive and active states of the soul, is too evident to need comment. His entire treatment of *motives*, is, as we have seen, similarly inconsistent.

³⁾ N. R. p. 40.

⁴⁾ Ib. p. 74.

⁵⁾ Ib. p. 102.

endeavoured to reform the world, but without success. Socrates, Plato, the Stoics, and many others knew that "virtue is unquestionably worthy to be chosen for its own sake";¹⁾ "they saw that its excellence was intrinsic, and founded in the nature of the things themselves";¹⁾ and yet they saw virtue often followed by pain and misery, and vice rewarded with the blessings of this life. They perceived the difficulty, but could not find a solution. It was a question of motives. The motives to virtue in this present life, are strong, but not sufficient to counterbalance the weight of evil passions and the other motives to evil. The ancient philosophers failed to regenerate mankind because they could not supply motives sufficient to support men in the practise of virtue, in the face of calamity and death. The examples of Socrates and Regulus are very grand, and will be imitated by men of right reason such as they, but for the majority of men, mere virtue is insufficient. There was therefore this inexplicable difficulty, "that God has endued men with such faculties as put them under a necessity of approving and choosing virtue in the judgment of their own minds, and yet has not given them wherewith to support themselves in the suitable and constant practise of it".²⁾ This difficulty ought to have led the ancient philosophers to the supposition of a future state of rewards and punishments. It did not have this effect, because of the wrong ideas they held concerning God; and it remained for the "Christian Revelation" to complete the system of morality, by teaching of a future life wherein the good shall be rewarded and the evil punished, according to their good or evil actions..

The "Christian Revelation" thus supplies the motives which are absolutely necessary to the support of the practise of virtue, and essential to any logical system of ethics. "He who disbelieves the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments, cannot defend to any effectual purpose, or enforce with any sufficient strength, the obligations

¹⁾ N. R. p. 74.

²⁾ Ib. pp. 75, 108.

of morality and natural religion".¹⁾ The motives supplied by the Christian religion are chiefly three:—(1) The knowledge that God accepts true repentance and pardons the sinner "is a most powerful and necessary motive to frail and sinful creatures, to encourage and support them effectually in the practise of their duty".²⁾ (2) The knowledge that God will give assistance to those endeavouring to obey him, "is another powerful motive to support men effectually in the practise of their duty".³⁾ (3) The rewards and punishments which the Christian religion proposes to obedience or disobedience "are a motive perfectly agreeable to men's natural *hopes* and *fears*, and worthy of God to make known by positive and express revelation".⁴⁾

The two former of these motives are really subordinate to the third, as conditions upon which the last motive can have its full effect. It is therefore upon the last of these motives that Clarke lays particular stress. He adduces several proofs in support of future rewards and punishments, to show that the motives supplied by the Christian religion are agreeable to "right reason". His two principle arguments are "drawn from the consideration of the moral attributes of God."⁵⁾ (1) If God be a being of infinite goodness and justice, he cannot but be pleased with good actions, and displeased with evil actions, and he cannot but "signify his approval and disapproval" in some manner. "And this can no way be done to any effectual purpose, but by the annexation of respective rewards and punishments".⁶⁾ (2) It is infinitely becoming an infinitely wise and good governor, that those who honour him, he should honour, that is, should distinguish them with suitable marks of his favour",⁶⁾ and that he should vindicate the honour of his laws, "after it has been diminished and infringed

¹⁾ N. R. p. 27.

²⁾ Ib. p. 176.

³⁾ Ib. p. 177.

⁴⁾ Ib. p. 178.

⁵⁾ Ib. p. 122.

⁶⁾ Ib. pp. 99, 100, 112, 113.

by sin".¹⁾ The only way in which this can be done is by means of rewards and punishments. Since then there must be rewards and punishments exactly suitable to the good and evil actions of men, and since they are not applied in this life, there must be a future life in which the good shall be rewarded, and the bad punished. Clarke adduces a number of other proofs as "collateral evidence"²⁾ of the certainty of such a future state, but those just given, he says, "seem to amount even to a demonstration".³⁾

In consideration of the depravity of mankind, and the failure of philosophy to reform society, there is evident need of education from a Christian standpoint. The Christian educator must know the causes of human depravity, and then he can apply the remedies. These causes are chiefly four;⁴⁾— (1) Men are careless and inattentive to their moral obligations and consequently they are ignorant of the rewards and punishments which follow virtue and vice in this world. Much more are they ignorant of what awaits them in the future life. Being thus ignorant of the strongest motives to morality, is it any wonder they disobey the law? (2) Early prejudices and a bad education fill the minds of men with many false ideas on moral matters, and these are a fruitful source of wrong actions. (3) The passions of men, their "appetites and desires of sense", and "the business and pleasures of the world, are so strong and unreasonable"⁵⁾ that they lead men away from the practise of virtue, especially when they are unacquainted with the motives supplied by the Christian religion. (4) In consequence of their passions, men are led to form evil habits, and these exert a continually increasing influence on the side of evil and against the practise of virtue. In view of these things, "most men have great need of particular teaching and much

¹⁾ N. R. p. 101.

²⁾ Ib. p. 113.

³⁾ Ib. p. 122.

⁴⁾ Ib. pp. 123—128.

⁵⁾ Ib. p. 125.

instruction".¹⁾ (1) To stir up their attention, and induce them "to apply their minds" to the discovery of moral truth. (2) To give them right ideas, and to convince them of the importance of right living, by showing the natural consequences that follow good and evil actions. The strongest motives to morality must be inculcated. (3) To enable men to overcome their passions and evil habits, by showing them how much, in every way, virtue is to be preferred to vice. Habits of virtue must be formed. That men may thus be instructed in virtue and trained in the practise of it, it is necessary that there should be "an order and succession of men, whose peculiar office and continual employment it may be, to teach and instruct people in their duty, to press and exhort them perpetually to the practise of it, and to be instruments of conveying to them extraordinary assistance for that purpose".²⁾ This is the function more particularly of preachers, but also in general of all who have anything to do with the education of men.

VIII. *The Chief Good.*

The Stoical system of ethics, although it commanded Clarke's highest admiration, did not receive his full assent. He asserts, with them, that "virtue is truly worthy to be chosen, even for its own sake", but he denies that virtue alone is the chief good. Grand and admirable as virtue is, the Stoics were wrong when they asserted "that virtue is self-sufficient to its own happiness". The universal consciousness of man declares that if there be a chief good, happiness must be an essential element of it. Thus, "he who dies for the sake of virtue is not really any more happy than he who dies for any fond opinion or any unreasonable humour or obstinacy whatever, if he has no other happiness than the bare satisfaction arising from the sense of his resoluteness in persisting to preserve his virtue, and adhering immoveably to what he

¹⁾ N. R. p. 121.

²⁾ Ib. p. 131.

judges to be right".¹⁾ "Nor is it *truly reasonable*, that men by adhering to virtue should part with their lives if thereby they eternally deprived themselves of all possibility of receiving any advantage from that adherence".²⁾ Virtue, then, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, not including happiness, cannot be the chief good. In the original uncorrupted state it was quite otherwise, for the nature of things was plainly such that virtue tended "to make all creatures happy", and in seeking the welfare and happiness of the whole, every individual found his own. In such a state, virtue, as including and involving happiness, was indeed the chief good. Now, however, the world is corrupted; virtue does not always bring happiness to the virtuous; on the contrary, the good are often the most unhappy. So also, evil men frequently escape the consequences of their wrong actions, and live in peace and quietness. Yet virtue is not to be given up, for we are compelled by the "reason of our minds", to declare it good. Is reason

¹⁾ N. R. pp. 108, 74.

²⁾ *Ib.* p. 109. We cannot but notice here the apparent contradiction between the dictates of reason in approving virtue and the *reasonable* dictates of self-love in refusing to follow virtue if happiness do not accompany it. Professor Sidgwick says:—"The contradiction between the two kinds of reasonableness was no doubt convenient for showing the need of theology to defend the truths of ethics, but as Clarke's theological system also requires ethical truth to be irrefragably established apart from theology—in order that the moral attributes of the Deity may be philosophically known—this contradiction was a serious source of weakness: it exhibited a conflict among the intuitions of the practical reason, for which no parallel could be found in the mathematical intuitions with which Clarke compares them". History of Ethics, p. 180. There is much of truth in this statement, but it seems to give too much importance to a contradiction more apparent than real. Reason approves of the *fitness* of human happiness as a whole, and therefore approves of the *fitness* of each individual's happiness. There is thus a reasonable self-love. The cause of the apparent conflict between self-love and love of others, is *ignorance* that in view of the future life, both are identical. Clarke did not pretend to establish a complete system of ethics apart from religion, but to show that the dictates of reason are supported by the truths of revelation, and that the latter are absolutely necessary to the completion of the system, and the reconciliation of apparent contradictions. For Atheists there are indeed such contradictions, but not for the Christian.

therefore unreasonable. Does it declare a thing to be good, which yet experience proves not good? The welfare of all and the welfare of the individual are both ends fit in themselves. Is there therefore a conflict between the two? If I seek my own highest good, do I trample on the rights of others; if I seek to promote the good of all, do I sacrifice my own? Clarke answers, no! We must suppose a future life, wherein all the inequalities of the present shall be set right, all apparent contradictions explained; when vice shall be punished and virtue rewarded, and there shall be a return to the original, uncorrupted state when virtue was to be chosen for its own sake. This is what Clarke has in mind, when he says:—"Virtue, 'tis true, in its proper seat, and with all its full effects and consequences unhindered, must be confessed to be the Chief Good; as being truly the enjoyment as well as the imitation of God".¹⁾ This is Clarke's definition of the Chief Good. In such a state as he supposes, virtue and happiness are inseparable, and both together constitute the chief good.

But from Clarke's own words, it is evident the essential element in the chief good is not virtue, but happiness. Virtue, Clarke says, is worthy to be chosen in this life because of the inward peace and satisfaction it brings. Now this is nothing but a degree of happiness; therefore the indispensable factor in the chief good, is not virtue but happiness. Thus in every supposable case, virtue is not an essential constituent of the chief good, but the essential means to its attainment, and the chief good is happiness. Although Clarke is inclined to place virtue and happiness together as co-ordinate elements of the chief good, in the original, uncorrupted state, and in the future, perfect life; yet, in regard to the present life, he admits that virtue is only the means towards the attainment of the chief good. "As the practise of it is circumstanced in this present world, and in the present state of things, 'tis plain it is not in itself the chief good, but only the means to it; as

¹⁾ N. R. p. 109.

running in a race is not itself the prize, but the way to obtain it".¹⁾ Yet in view of the life to come, taking the present and the future as one great whole, virtue is the certain and infallible means to obtain happiness. The virtuous man will sooner or later receive the full reward of his virtue, and the vicious will receive the punishment of his vice.

If we ask whether the chief good be the good of the individual or the good of all; Clarke's answer is,—they are identical. By seeking the good of all, each man best secures his own. Thus in view of the future life, he asserts what Cumberland did of the present, that the good of all is the good of each. But with Locke, Clarke would say, we must not directly seek our own happiness, lest we miss it. We must rather seek the welfare of all, and we may be assured we shall thereby best promote our own. Also in promoting the good of all, it is not so much their happiness we should directly aim at, but virtue, or perfection of character, the necessary condition of happiness. Thus moral teachers direct their endeavours towards making their fellow-men virtuous, knowing that, if they succeed, they will at the same time secure happiness for all and each.

Although Clarke asserts the identity of the universal with the individual happiness, he does not make individual happiness the ground of obligation. Obligation is not founded on self-love but on fitness. The good of all is in itself fit to be chosen. The mind of man unavoidably recognises this fitness; this recognition of fitness, joined with the consciousness of self as a free agent, lays an obligation upon the soul of man. The knowledge that by working for the good of all, I best procure my own, is rather of the nature of a motive. It is, in fact, the strongest motive imaginable, and only by extending this knowledge, can we hope ever to regenerate the world.

Not only does the *good of all* supply the strongest motive to right action, but so far as our fellow-men are concerned, it is the measure of right and wrong. Being fit in itself, all

¹⁾ N. R. p. 109.

actions which tend towards it must also be fit. This is the subordinate fitness already mentioned, a fitness of certain actions as means towards certain ends. "Those things only are truly good in their own nature which tend either to the universal benefit and welfare of all men, or at least are not destructive of it".¹⁾ "Whatever tends directly and certainly to promote the good and happiness of the whole, must needs be agreeable to the will of God".²⁾ On the contrary, those actions are evil which tend to the disadvantage of all. In every case, the good of all is the measure of the rectitude of men's actions towards one another. Again, not only is the "good of all" motive to action, and measure of right and wrong, but it is the ethical end, and the moral ideal. Including as it does, the highest perfection of character with the greatest happiness, it is the highest possible end and ideal a moral being can set up for itself. It is nothing less than the perfection and happiness of God himself. The perfection of God, Clarke says, "is the foundation of his own unchangeable happiness".³⁾ So with men, in striving after the divine ideal of perfection, they are advancing towards the happiness to be found alone in God. Thus, in the highest sense, "virtue in its proper seat, with all its full effects and consequences unhindered, must be confessed to be the chief good, as being truly the enjoyment as well as the imitation of God".⁴⁾

¹⁾ N. R. p. 35.

²⁾ Ib. p. 96.

³⁾ Ib. p. 92.

⁴⁾ Ib. p. 109. This is the crowning point of Clarke's ethical system. It is not egoistic, but altruistic in the strictest sense. He did not believe that men always act from selfish motives. Experience had taught him the contrary. It was impossible, then, to found obligation in the identity of the universal and individual good. Hence his only refuge from hedonistic egoism, was to declare that moral distinctions are founded in the nature of things, and obligation in the recognition of these distinctions. But none the less did he recognise the insufficiency of mere moral perception to the practical working out of his ethical system. It was for him an undeniable fact that most men are not men of "right reason", but ruled by self-love and the power of passions. Hence the necessity of higher motives than the

CHAPTER IV.

CONCLUSION.

1. Influence of Clarke at the time he lived.

The influence Clarke exerted upon the ethical and religious thought of his day, must have been very considerable. His prominence may be dated from his preaching of the Boyle Lectures of 1704 and 1705. These works placed him at the head of the rationalistic theologians of his time, and distinguished him as the foremost opponent of the Deists. If we except Shaftesbury, Clarke was also the most prominent English ethical philosopher of his time. Indeed his influence among Churchmen must have been far greater than that of the deistically inclined Shaftesbury. Locke had died in 1704. Cumberland was still living, but was already an old man, and belonged to a previous generation. Berkeley although by far a greater thinker than Clarke, devoted but little attention to ethical subjects. Hutcheson's first essays did not appear until the year 1725, while in the meantime Clarke's two lectures had passed through six editions. Butler's "Analogy" was first published in the year 1736. Thus during a period of some twenty years, Clarke enjoyed great esteem and popularity; so much so, that, as Hoadly says, "he could command but very little time for his own studies". His friends considered him a genius of the first order, and his enemies could not but regard him as their strongest opponent. Leslie Stephen says,—"Around him clustered a little group of men, chiefly members of his own University, who were among the most vigorous controversialists of their day; though now, without exception,

mere knowledge of moral truth or even the love of virtue. The consideration of a future life and the consequent identity of the universal with the individual good, supplied the necessary link in the chain, and but for Clarke's inconsistent position with regard to motives, his system from a theological point of view, would have strong claim to be regarded as logical, notwithstanding the objections that may be taken to certain minor points less carefully treated by him.

consigned to utter oblivion. Poor half-mad Whiston was his admiring friend and biographer. Sykes Jackson and Balguy, were amongst his attached adherents. Hoadly, the leader of the Latitudinarian party, was his intimate friend and warm admirer. Young men of promise, such as Butler, Hutcheson, Kames and Collier, appealed to him in philosophical difficulties; and though assailed by the orthodox, lead by Waterland, and accused of dishonest compliance with the articles, he plainly exerted a powerful influence upon the more liberal thinkers of the day".¹⁾ The fact that he was chosen by the Princess of Wales to defend English philosophy against Leibniz, is sufficient to indicate the reputation he must have enjoyed.

II. Influence of Clarke on later ethical thought.

In Ethics Clarke may be considered the head and founder of the later "Intellectual School", of which he and Wollaston and Price were the most important members. Of this school, John Balguy was most closely allied to Clarke, while Wollaston and Price were more independent in their speculations.

In the year 1728, Balguy published his chief work—"The Foundation of Moral Goodness".²⁾ The immediate object of this work was to refute the ethical theory of Hutcheson, and to establish that of Clarke. Balguy's central thought is Clarke's position that "virtue is conformity to reason; the acting according to the fitnesses which arise out of the eternal and immutable relations of agents to objects". His criticism of Hutcheson is interesting as being made entirely from Clarke's point of view, and since it is possible he may have consulted Clarke before publishing the work. His four chief objections to Hutcheson's theory are as follows:³⁾—(1) "It represents virtue

¹⁾ "English thought in the 18th Century" Vol. I, p. 129.

²⁾ Of Balguy's other works, the most important is:— "A letter to a Deist concerning the beauty and excellency of moral virtue, and the support and improvement which it receives from the Christian religion". Published in 1726. See *Encycl. Britt.*, Art. "Balguy".

³⁾ *Encycl. Britt.*, Art. "Balguy".

as arbitrary and insecure, by making it depend on two instincts, benevolent affection and the moral sense". (2) "That if true, brutes, since they have kind instincts and affections, must have some degree of virtue". (3) "That if such affections constitute virtue, the virtue must be greater in proportion as the affections are stronger, contrary to the notion of virtue, which is the control of the affections". (4) "That virtue is degraded by being made a result of instincts, instead of being represented as the higher part of our nature". Balguy also assailed Tindal in defence of Clarke.¹⁾ Tindal had said that if the laws of nature be perfect, then there is no place for revelation. Balguy replied,—“The law of nature is perfect and unchangeable, and men can thereby know what it is their duty to do, but the light of reason may have, and has had, added knowledge by revelation”.

If Balguy was throughout a disciple of Clarke, Wollaston,²⁾ a man of greater importance, represented a curious one-sided development of Clarke's theory. From Clarke's doctrine of the differences of things, and the consequent fitness of things, it was not a long step to the assertion that whatever is, is right. In fact, such a conclusion would seem the only logical one, were it not that Clarke's "fitness of things" is not so much a fitness at present existing, as an ideal fitness which Clarke indeed says exists in things, but which, as his own words show, rather proceeds from the approval of the mind when things exist in certain relations, or are thought of as so existing. But Clarke is not clear on this point, and frequently it would seem as if the subjective element were altogether left out of account, and the fitness of things something existing apart from any perceiving mind. Fitness was the natural order of things; unfitness, the negation of that order. Thus Clarke makes the strange and obscure statement, that those who refuse to act according to the rules of justice, and to con-

¹⁾ "A second letter to a Deist concerning a book entitled, 'Christianity as old as creation', more particularly that chapter which relates to Dr. Clarke".

²⁾ "The Religion of Nature delineated". Lond. 1722.

form their wills to the “eternal fitness of things”, are “setting up their own unreasonable self-will in opposition to the nature and reason of things, and endeavouring, as much as in them lies, to make things be what they are not, and cannot be”.¹⁾ Clarke did not follow this statement to its logical conclusion, but Wollaston did, and it would appear to have been assertions such as this, which suggested to him his analogy between virtue and truth. Moral evil, according to Wollaston, “is the practical denial of a true position, and moral good the affirmation of it”.²⁾ To steal is wrong because it is to deny that the thing stolen is what it is, the property of another. Every right action is the affirmation of a truth; every wrong action is the denial of a truth. Clarke had already said that wrong action was absurd and ridiculous, but this absurdity had rather reference to the clearness of moral perception than the actual denial of a fact. It is unreasonable to act wrongly, because reason is the moral faculty, and commands obedience; it is unreasonable to deny a fact, because reason asserts it. There is here implied the distinction afterwards made by Kant, between the practical and the speculative reason. Clarke distinguishes them, but not sufficiently, and in consequence is obscure and inconsistent on this point. Wollaston makes no such distinction, and thus falls into still greater absurdity than Clarke. As Leslie Stephen says,—“Thirty years of profound meditation had convinced Wollaston that the reason why a man should abstain from breaking his wife’s head was, that it was a way of denying that she was his wife. All sin, in other words, was lying”.³⁾ In other regards Wollaston’s ethics is very similar to that of Clarke. Even more than Clarke he lays stress upon the analogy between mathematical and moral truth. The object of his chief work was to discover whether or not there were such a thing as natural religion, and if so, what it was. With him, religion and morality were identical.

¹⁾ N. R. p 41.

²⁾ *Enycl. Britt.*, Art. “Wollaston”.

³⁾ “English thought in the 18th Cent.” Vol. I. p. 130.

His ethical system, even more than Clarke's, was independent of revelation. Happiness is the ethical end, and virtue is the means to it. But in this world, virtue and happiness only *tend* to coincide, for often the virtuous are miserable, and the vicious happy. Then, like Clarke, he falls back on the justice of God. "If this life be all, the general and usual state of mankind is scarce consistent with the idea of a reasonable cause". Hence the necessity of a future life, and future rewards and punishments. While at Cambridge, Wollaston had enjoyed a high reputation as a scholar, and his "Religion of Nature delineated", greatly increased this reputation, for in a few years 10,000 copies were sold; the seventh edition was published in 1750, and the opinion of the author was quoted by contemporary writers with profound respect.¹⁾

More important to the history of ethics is the philosopher and economist Richard Price.²⁾ Belonging to a later generation than Clarke, and showing in his writings the influence of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson and Butler, he yet belongs to the school of Clarke and Wollaston, and with them, doubtless owed much to the Cambridge Platonists, the real founders of the Intellectual School. His "Review of the principle questions and difficulties in morals", was published in the year 1757. Price appears to have carefully studied the works of Clarke and Butler; he claims to be a disciple of the latter, and yet stands opposed to Shaftesbury and Hutcheson. He is especially concerned in maintaining:—(1) Actions are in themselves right and wrong. (2) Right and wrong are simple ideas, incapable of analysis. (3) These ideas are perceived immediately by the intuitive power of reason or understanding. "All actions being necessarily right, indifferent or wrong, what determines which of these an action should be accounted, is the truth of the case, or the relations and circumstances of the agent and the objects. In certain relations there is a certain con-

¹⁾ Stephen, "Engl. thought in 18th Cent." Vol. I. p. 130.

²⁾ See Encycl. Britt., Art. "Price" by Rev. Thos. Fowler. Also Leslie Stephen, as above; Sidgwick's "History of Ethics"; Jodl's "Gesch. d. Ethik", Vol. I.

duct right. There are certain manners of behavior which we unavoidably approve, as soon as these relations are known".¹⁾ Thus, with Clarke, Price says right and wrong are founded in the nature of things, and the understanding intuitively and unavoidably perceives moral distinctions. This moral perception is not the function of the speculative reason but of the moral reason. Thus Price avoids the confusion found in Clarke's system, between mathematical and moral truth. Mathematical truth or truth in general, according to Price, is perceived by the speculative reason; while the distinctions of right and wrong are perceived by the moral reason. In connection with this distinction we see the import of Price's second position, that right and wrong are simple ideas, incapable of analysis. Clarke had tried to show how right and wrong are founded on the differences of things, without seeing that he had in reality given no reason at all to account for moral approval. Price does not attempt such an analysis. With him the notions *right, fit, ought, duty, obligation* are identical, and cannot be resolved into simpler ideas. To say an action is right is to say my moral understanding necessarily approves of it, and this is the only explanation that can be given. "It is a very necessary previous observation, that our ideas of right and wrong are simple ideas, and must therefore be ascribed to some power of immediate perception in the human mind. He that doubts this need only try to give definitions of them which shall amount to more than synonymous expressions".

Thus far, Price's system is only that of Clarke made more consistent. What is especially peculiar to Price is his treatment of the *judgment of the moral reason* as a spring of action in relation to the will, and of the *emotions* as an additional spring of action. Clarke had neglected the emotions, or had considered them almost entirely as tending to evil. Hutcheson and his school had made them the original source of all conduct, good and evil. Price, in a way, combines both views. While giving the prominence to the intellect in its function

¹⁾ We have quoted from the Encycl. Britt., Art. "Price" by Thos. Fowler.

of moral approval, and while asserting with Clarke that the emotions are the source of evil, he declares that, when enlightened by reason, the emotions may aid in the determination of virtuous conduct. "Some degree of pleasure is inseparable from the observation of virtuous actions". The emotions are necessary as an aid to reason, because we do not possess reason in a sufficient degree; if we did, there would be no need of the emotions as an aid to virtue.¹⁾ Here again Price returns to the position of Clarke, who believes men of "right reason" both approve of the right and act according to it, without other motive for such action.

It is not necessary for our purpose to touch on the other parts of Price's theory. It is sufficient to have shown how he attempted a reconciliation between Clarke's intellectual ethics and the systems of the emotional school. The resemblance of Price's ethical speculations to those of Kant, has often been noticed. The Rev. Thos. Fowler thus sums up the principle points of similarity:—"The exaltation of reason; the depreciation of the affections; the unwillingness of both authors to regard the partial and accidental structure of humanity, the mere make and structure of man, as the basis of morality,—in other words, to recognise ethical distinctions as relative to human nature; the ultimate and irresolvable character of the idea of rectitude; the notion that reason imposes the idea as a law upon the will, becoming thus our independent spring of action; the insistence upon the reality of liberty or the power of acting and determining; the importance attached to reason as a distinct source of ideas; and, it may be added, the discrimination (so celebrated in the philosophy of Kant) of the moral (or practical) and the speculative understanding".²⁾

¹⁾ Price even goes so far as to say, that the more an action is influenced by the emotions, the less moral it is; and the more directly it proceeds from mere intellectual approval, the more of moral worth does it possess.

²⁾ Encycl. Britt., Art. "Price".

III. *Further development of Clarke's ideas.*

Since the time of Clarke, two principle questions have more or less claimed the attention of English ethical writers; the one referring to the moral faculty, the other to the moral standard. The former asks, how do we perceive moral distinctions and recognise obligation? The latter seeks to discover a standard whereby we may determine the moral quality of actions. Both questions received their answer from Clarke, as well as from his predecessors; it remains to indicate the various answers they received from later writers.

A. The moral faculty.

Clarke and his school attempted to reduce morality to an intellectual system, as nearly as possible approximating to the system of natural and mathematical sciences. With this end in view, they made reason the faculty whereby we perceive moral distinctions, and moral perception, they tried to show, was a system of knowledge founded on the nature of external things and the constitution of the human mind. They did not, however, sufficiently define the meaning of the term *reason*, nor distinguish clearly enough between intellectual perception and moral approval. The moral approval of which Clarke spoke, was evidently a *feeling* or *emotion*, although he did not seem to have regarded it as such. This idea, thus latent in Clarke, was developed by the emotional school, of which Shaftesbury, Hutcheson and Butler may be taken as representative.

Shaftesbury is not to be considered as having started from the standpoint of Clarke, except as Clarke represented the ethical system then prevalent, for the "Inquiry concerning virtue and merit" was first published by Toland in the year 1699. Shaftesbury founds his ethics on a psychological study of impulses and sentiments. There are three classes of impulses,—*natural affections*, *self-affections* and *unnatural affections*. Virtue consists in the harmony between the natural and the self-affections, with complete exclusion of unnatural affections. Perception of this harmony produces a sense of pleasure in

the mind, and a sense of pain accompanies the contemplation of actions where harmony is lacking. This pleasure has a two-fold source. It arises from the contemplation of actions which produce happiness for others, and also of those which bring happiness to ourselves. Right action produces happiness for society and also for the individual. Thus is the moral sense always in harmony with rational judgment as to what is good for the race and with the dictates of rational self-interest. Thus Shaftesbury distinctly asserts what Clarke leaves us to infer, that moral approval is a pleasurable emotion or feeling, produced by the contemplation of right action. Clarke lays more stress on the outward constitution of things, as the cause of moral approval, while Shaftesbury emphasizes rather the feeling itself as the source of moral knowledge and obligation.

Hutcheson's doctrine of the "moral sense" is very similar to that of Shaftesbury,¹⁾ although he goes a step further in the direction of the independence of the moral faculty. Besides the five external senses, men have many others. Among these he mentions,—consciousness of self; sense of beauty; public sense; *moral sense*; sense of humour; sense of the ridiculous. The moral faculty is a "moral sense of beauty in actions and affections by which we perceive virtue in ourselves and others". This moral sense has had no growth nor history, but has been implanted in man, exactly as it is now among the more civilised races.²⁾ We experience a feeling of satisfaction at good actions and of dissatisfaction when we contemplate bad actions; and this moral sense is therefore incapable of education or development.³⁾

¹⁾ In the year 1725, Hutcheson published "An inquiry into the original of our ideas of beauty and virtue, in two treatises, in which the principles of the late Earl of Shaftesbury are explained and defended against the author of the Fable of the Bees (Mandeville), and the ideas of moral good are established according to the statements of the ancient moralists, with an attempt to introduce a mathematical calculation in subjects of morality".

²⁾ Encycl. Britt., Art. "Hutcheson" by Prof. T. Fowler.

³⁾ The opinion of Professor Calderwood is even more pronounced than that of Hutcheson. He says,—"Conscience is a faculty which, from

The *moral sense* of Hutcheson, is *conscience* with Butler. In human nature Butler finds two independent and co-ordinate principles, "a principle of reflexion or conscience", and the principle of self-love. Both are authoritative, and it is not in accordance with nature that either should be overruled, but there is no conflict possible between them. Still, the dictates of conscience are clear and certain, while self-love requires calculations which only give probable results. Conscience, therefore, is the only infallible guide; it perceives moral distinctions and hence imposes its obligation upon the soul.¹⁾ The true law of our nature is conscience, and virtue consists in obedience to its commands. Conscience has supreme authority, if not power. "Had it strength, as it has right; had it power, as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world".²⁾

The opinions of Hume and Smith with regard to moral perception would seem to be a reaction from the dogmatic theory of conscience held by Hutcheson and Butler towards the more strictly psychological theory of Shaftesbury. Moral approbation, according to Hume, is founded on our perception of the useful consequences of actions. It is not a mere intellectual assent or judgment, but a particular kind of pleasure arising from the contemplation of useful actions. It is a sort of sympathetic feeling with the pleasures of others. Hume says,—“an action or sentiment or character is virtuous or vicious because its view causes a pleasure or uneasiness of a particular kind”.³⁾ “The very feeling constitutes our praise or admiration”.

Adam Smith similarly maintains that moral perception consists in a sympathetic pleasure in the effects of right action,

its very nature, cannot be educated. As well propose to teach the eye how and what to see; and the ear, how and what to hear; as to teach reason how to perceive the self-evident, and what truths are of this nature”. “Handbook of Moral Philosophy” Ch. 4 § 6.

¹⁾ Encycl. Britt. Art., “Butler”, by R. Adamson. Also Sidgwick, “Outlines of the History of Ethics”.

²⁾ Sermon II.

³⁾ “Treatise on Human Nature” Bk. III. Part I. § 2.

and a sympathetic disapproval of wrong action, but says the sympathy is rather with the motives to action than with the actions themselves. What we call our conscience is really sympathy with the feelings of an imaginary impartial spectator looking at our conduct.¹⁾

The later intuitionists, as Reid and Stewart, deviate considerably from the writers just mentioned, and, with Clarke and Price, give more prominence to reason as the ethical faculty, while admitting the important part which the emotions play in the estimation of the moral quality of actions and as impulses to the will. We cannot but see, in the above writers, a certain resemblance to Clarke's theory of moral approbation, when the latter is relieved from the inconsistencies and confusions caused by the author's attempt to show an analogy between mathematical and moral truth.

B. The moral standard.

Bacon had declared the *good of communion*, to be "greater and worthier" than *self-good*, without attempting to show the identity of both. Cumberland asserted that the good of all was the end and standard of all right human action, and at the same time identical with the good of the individual. Sidgwick says,—“so far he may fairly be called the precursor of the later utilitarianism”.²⁾ Clarke accepted the utilitarian standard of Cumberland, but in a modified sense. “The universal benefit and welfare of all men” is the standard for determining the moral quality of those actions which concern the mutual relations of mankind, but in the present world the virtuous man must often promote the good of all at the sacrifice of his own. It is only in view of the future life with its rewards and punishments that he who seeks the good of all best secures his own. Taking both this life and the next into consideration, virtue and happiness coincide, and are inseparable.

¹⁾ Sidgwick: — “Outlines of the History of Ethics” Ch. 4 § 9.

²⁾ “Hist. of Ethics” p. 170.

The problem of happiness was not lost sight of by later English philosophers. Shaftesbury calls philosophy, "the study of happiness". He seems to think harmony between the selfish and disinterested emotions is conducive both to the public good and the happiness of the individual. Hutcheson distinctly states the utilitarian standard, in the very words afterwards used by Bentham. He says,—“that action is best which procures the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers, and that is worse which in like manner occasions misery”.¹⁾ With him we first find the “moral algebra” so characteristic of later Utilitarians. Hume takes a similar position. With him it is the perception of the utility of an action which causes the feeling of moral approbation, and those actions are right which produce pleasure to ourselves and others. Still more prominent is the utilitarian standard in Paley’s “Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy”. According to Paley, the moral quality of any action is to be decided by its tendency to promote or diminish the general happiness. Bentham takes still stronger ground than any of his predecessors. Excluding all other moral standards, he makes the pleasurable or painful consequences of actions, the sole measure of their moral quality. Since good actions often produce pain, and bad actions pleasure, there arises the need of a calculation similar to that of Hutcheson. Summing up the amount of happiness and misery produced by a given action, a balance on the side of happiness renders the action right, while an overweight of pain makes it wrong. Considering all those who are affected by the results of action, “the greatest happiness of the greatest number” becomes the standard of right. Leaving aside the many difficulties connected with estimating the quantity and degree of happiness, the one point where the Utilitarianism of Bentham seems inadequate, is in regard to the relation of the general happiness to the happiness of the individual. In the case of a conflict between the two, which is to be preferred? According to Cumberland, such a conflict was scarcely possible, but

¹⁾ Encycl. Britt., Art. “Hutcheson” by Prof. Fowler.

this position is contrary to the facts of experience, as Clarke had shown. Mill only rendered the question more difficult by declaring private happiness must always be subordinated to the general happiness, without being able to show the identity of the two. If this cannot be shown, how are men to be induced to prefer the general happiness to their own? The only answer of Bentham and Mill is to enumerate the *sanctions* of morality. In addition to Bentham's physical, political and moral sanctions, Mill adds the "feeling of unity with his fellow-creatures", and lays great stress on the formation of virtuous habits whereby men are enabled to do the right, even when they know it will bring unhappiness to themselves.

Such are the utilitarian sources of the feeling of obligation. They seem quite sufficient to explain most of the ordinary actions of unreflecting men. But when, upon calculation of the pleasurable and painful effects of actions, a man finds that to continue living is to continue an existence miserable to himself though perhaps beneficial to others, what is there to prevent his straightway putting an end to a life so unprofitable? Utilitarianism has no answer, and unless we fall back upon some unexplained and unexplainable sense of obligation, the logical outcome to such a man is self-destruction. Clarke appreciates this difficulty. He denies the Stoical position that virtue is self-sufficient to its own happiness. "It does not follow that he who dies for the sake of virtue is really any more happy than he that dies for any fond opinion whatever".¹⁾ And yet the man knows "in the judgment of his own mind, that the cause of virtue is not to be given up". He finds, therefore, no explanation of the facts of the moral consciousness than to assume a future life. Relying upon the "Justice of God", he makes this assumption. The soul is immortal; the present life is but the beginning of life; time is but the threshold of eternity. In this present life much of virtue goes

¹⁾ N. R. p. 108.

unrewarded; the good even receive the reward of evil deeds. We must consider the whole of life and not only the beginning. From this standpoint, and with this enlarged view, we can see that the good of all is the good of each. Thus are supplied the perfect moral standard; the only sufficient motive; and the sole explanation of the facts of the moral consciousness.



L I F E.

I was born in the city of Quebec, Canada, Oct. 24th 1866; received my preliminary education chiefly at Huntingdon High School; graduated in the Faculty of Arts, McGill University, in the Spring of 1888. After teaching for a year in Montreal, in October 1889 I entered the University of Leipzig, where I have since studied Philosophy under Professors Heinze and Wundt, Political Economy under Professors Roscher and Brentano, and Pedagogics under Professor Masius.

I desire to express my gratitude to the Professors whose lectures I have been privileged to hear, and especially to Professor Heinze for his kindly counsel and encouragement.

James Edward LeRossignol.





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